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# **RAMANAND TO RAM TIRATH**

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INCLUDING THE SIKH GURUS**

**SECOND EDITION**

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## PUBLISHERS' NOTE TO THE FIRST EDITION

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HIS new book, as its title suggests, recounts the lives and teachings of the Saints of Northern India from Ramanand to Ram Tirath. It includes sketches of Ramanand and Kabir, Nanak and the Sikh Gurus, of Ravi Das the Chamar Saint, of Mira Bai the ascetic queen of Chitor, Vallabhacharya, Tulasi Das, Virajanand, Dayanand and Swami Ram Tirath. The reformation in Hindu beliefs and rituals effected by these great Saints of India may be fairly compared with the great Protestant movement of Europe. But the Indian reformers like Kabir and Mira Bai were in no sense militant theologians like Luther and Zwingli. They did not attempt to overturn existing religious institutions nor overthrow the established government. The preachings of great Vaishnrvite reformers, the Ramanandis and the Ravidasis, were mostly directed to the freeing of religion from caste superstition. These saints are the sources from which the different ascetic orders of Northern India take their origin. The influence of the Kabir-Panthis and the Ramanandis is felt even at the present time. Some of the rapturous songs and hymns of the Vernaculars are to be found in the ecstatic utterances of Mira Bai, of Nanak and Kabir. The sketches contain ample quotations from these hymns as well as from the sayings and teachings of these saints.

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# RAMANAND

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## INTRODUCTION

SOUTH India has made very valuable contributions to the religious thought of India. In fact, when Hindustan was passing through a period of great political convulsions, when her ancient civilization with its magnificent heritage of culture was being overthrown and subdued by Muslim invaders from outside, it was in Southern India that Indian culture was preserved and promoted. The Deccan generally enjoyed immunity from those ever recurring foreign incursions to which the plains of Northern India were subjected, and was, therefore, in a position to follow the even tenor of peaceful progress in the realms of human thought and feeling.

The Deccan kept ablaze the torch of Hindu civilization and became the rallying point of all that was true, beautiful and of good report in our ancient heritage, when the rest of India was 'by darkness and dangers compassed round'. The South has produced Sankara, Ramanuja, Madhwā, Vidyāranya and Sayana who have carved their names deep on the illuminating scroll of Indian History.

It will be generally admitted that the Hindu Religion found its best exponents in the South, and that its philosophy was put into a systematic form in that region. The great Vaishnava movement of which Ramanand, the subject of this short sketch, is the precursor in Northern India, has found the most powerful and lasting expression in the philosophy of Ramanuja.

Tradition dating from the 13th century A.D. ascribes the birth of Ramanuja to the year 918 of the Saka era (A.D. 1161). Ramanuja lived at Conjeeveram and early fell under the influence of Vaishnavism which had been gaining popularity by the efforts of the Alvars in the Tamil land. Ramanuja became a disciple of Yamunamuni who was a great exponent of the creed of devotion. The essential contribution of Ramanuja to Indian thought was the effort to develop in a complete system in opposition to the monism of Sankara, a philosophical basis for the doctrine of devotion to God which was presented in poetical form in the Psalms of the Alvars.

Ramananda was fifth in apostolic succession to Ramanuja. Ramananda was born at Pravig. His father was a Kanyakubja Brahman named Punyasad, and his mother's name was Sudreka. Ramananda was gifted with precocious intelligence and was consequently sent to Benares to get a finishing touch to his education, where he devoted himself to the study of religious philosophy. One day he happened to meet Raghavananda who was a prominent teacher of his time of the Sri Vaishnava School founded by Ramanuja. Raghavananda admitted Ramananda into his school and initiated him into the secrets of his creed. After serving his Guru for a considerable time, he went on a pilgrimage over the greater part of India.

The Sri Vaishnava Church, of which Raghava nanda and Ramananda were the leading lights, allows only Brahmins to occupy the post of teacher, and imposes upon all the strictest rules as to the preparation and consumption of food. When Ramananda returned from his long wanderings, he essayed to rejoin the brotherhood which refused to receive him, alleging that it must have been impossible for him during his peregrinations to

carry out all these observances A controversy ensued between Raghavananda and Ramananda which was fraught with momentous consequences for the religious history of that age Ramananda, by his expulsion from the brotherhood for an imaginary impurity was converted to broader notions He entirely cast aside the spirit of caste exclusiveness and the pride that goes along with one's consciousness of spiritual superiority He became imbued with a feeling of spiritual humility and began to recognise the equality of all men whatever their caste, colour or creed in the eyes of God Henceforth, in preaching his message of Bhakti, Ramananda would not give to a party what was meant for all mankind

The most striking point about Ramananda's teaching, says Dr Grierson, and that which has captured the mind of India, is that, so long as man or woman has a genuine living faith in the Supreme, his or her caste or position are matters of no importance The Sri Vaishnavas admitted only Brahmins as teachers and only people of high caste as lay members But Ramananda made light of such caste pretensions and declared in eloquent terms —

*Jati pants puchchar nahi hoi,  
Hari ho bhaje so Hari ka hoi*

" Let no one ask a man's caste or with whom he eats If a man is devoted to Hari, he becomes Hari's own "

He had twelve disciples and these included, besides, Brahmins, a Mussalman weaver, a rajput, a Jat, and a barber Nay, two of them were women

A spirit of sympathy for the lower castes and classes of Hindu society has been from the beginning a distinctive feature of Vaishnavism To Ramananda belongs the honour of developing this ethical tendency of Vaishnava thought With that genuinely spiritual

touch of nature which makes the whole world kin. Ramananda admitted all high and low alike into the fold. By making itself accessible to the degraded castes, his great message gave a new direction to the spiritual thought of Hindustan. This remarkable religious revival carried its influence far and wide and stirred the stagnant waters. It rendered the Hindu religion all embracing in its sympathy, catholic in its outlook, a perennial fountain of delight and inspiration. This new ethical outlook was developed in various directions by Ramananda's successors, but through all their teaching we find emphasis ever laid upon two great principles (1) that perfect Bhakti consists in perfect love directed to God, and (2) that all servants of God are brothers. His follower Kabir carried this doctrine of catholicity still farther, and it reached its full development, and what is more, its general acceptance by the masses of Hindustan, seven generations later, through the works of modern India's greatest poet, Tulsidas. These great saints have taught that every individual can work out his own salvation by dedicating himself to the Lord, that in matters of faith, the invidious distinctions of caste and colour have absolutely no place, and that the mediation of a priest with all its paraphernalia of rites and ceremonies has no meaning and efficacy, when 'the eye of the soul' turns round from darkness to light, from the finite to the Infinite.

The *Bhaktamala* of Nabhaji gives an account of the twelve chief disciples of Ramananda and recounts some interesting legends about each one of them. The list is interesting as showing his utter disregard for caste in matters of faith. They were (1) Anantanand, (2) Sukhanand, (3) Surasuranand, (4) Narhariyanand, (5) Pipa, (6) Kabir, (7) Bavanand, (8) Sena, (9) Dhana, (10) Rai Dasa, (11) Padmavati, (12) Surasari. Of these disciples Pipa was a soldier, Kabir was a Mussalman weaver, Sena was a barber by caste, Dhana-

'belonged' to the Jat caste, and Rai Dasa was a leather worker and belonged to one of the most despised castes. Of these Padmavati and Surasari were women. While we may assume that such men as Adantanand and Sukhanand were Brahmins, this list also contains a Mussalman, a professional soldier, a barber, a boorish Jat and lowest of the low, Rai Dasa, the Chamar. We cannot, of course, fail to notice the important position assigned to women. Although women saints are frequently met with in all the sects of the Vaishnava reformation, Ramananda is the teacher who placed the sexes on an equality by calling two women 'to be his disciples.'

The life of eternal joy, says Ramanuja, is reserved for the first three castes, for the Sudra cannot be admitted to the study of the Vedas which is essential for the acquisition of knowledge. Thus, in the philosophy of Ramanuja rigid sectarianism triumphs over the universality of the love of God. But it was Ramananda who removed this restriction and threw the gates of heaven open to every caste and colour and creed. The Brahmins taught only pupils of their own caste and in their own mutts, but Ramananda taught everybody and everywhere. He had no esoteric doctrines reserved only for the privileged few. Like Gotama Buddha, he would never have the closed fist of the teacher who withheld some doctrines and communicated others.

In order that his gospel of faith may appeal to all alike, and may be widely diffused, he adopted the medium of the vernacular for his teaching. His predecessors of the school of Bhakti wrote only in Sanskrit which was understood only by a few learned men. But for Ramananda with disciples like Kabir and Rai Dasa who were not Pandits learned in the antique lore, this was intolerable. He therefore taught in the vernacular,

and his followers composed their hymns in one or other of the various dialects of Hindi. He himself wrote little that has come down to us, but his successors Kabir and Tulsī Das composed in Hindi such great masterpieces of religious poetry which the world would not willingly let die.

The labours of these saints led to the development of vernacular literature. As in Europe, the Bible was made accessible to all by the Reformers, so here in India. The sacred literature, the knowledge of which was the sole monopoly of the Brahmins, now found its expression in the vernacular, thanks to the efforts of these Vaishnavite saints. The national intellect was freed from the thraldom of scholastic learning. It was largely owing to the influence of Ramananda and his followers, says Dr Grierson, that Hindi became a literary language, and not only was its most shining light, Tulsidas a devout follower of Ramananda, but all his poetry was written under the direct influence of his teaching. The debt which the literature of Hindustan owes to Ramananda cannot be overestimated. The language of the common people attained the dignity of a classical tongue, when the poet singers of Hindustan made use of it, while

Pouring out their full heart  
In profuse strains of unpremeditated art

What this great religious reformation accomplished in Northern as well as Southern India may be fitly described in the words of Ranade "It gave a literature of considerable value in the vernacular language of the country. It modified the strictness of the old spirit of caste exclusiveness. It raised the Sudra classes to the position of spiritual power and social importance almost equal to that of the Brahmins. It gave sanctity to the family relations and raised the status of women. It made the

nation more humane, at the same time more prone to hold together by mutual toleration It suggested, and partly carried out, a plan of reconstruction with the Muhammadans It subordinated the importance of rites and ceremonies and of pilgrimages and fasts, and of learning and contemplation to the higher excellence of worship by means of love and faith It checked the excesses of Polytheism It tended in all these ways to raise the nation generally to a higher level of capacity both of thought and action "

From the time of Ramananda down to the seventeenth century we find a long and remarkable series of poet saints in Northern India, who handed on from one to another the lamp of an inward and a fervent faith The first great name in this line of saints is that of Ramananda who gave eloquent expression to a purer form of faith and a higher ideal of life In Kabir and Tulsī—he was

The fountain light of all their days  
The master light of all their seeing

The spiritual influence that emanated from the personality of this great saint, flowed in various streams through all the provinces of India As typical of those two currents of religious life which claim him as their source we may name Tulsidas on the one hand, and Kabir on the other India has had many reformers, but none except perhaps Buddha, has been adopted as a religious teacher by so many professed followers He is one of the greatest reformers and one of the greatest poets that India has produced When we turn to Kabir we find that he started a movement in the world of Hindu thought which was destined to give a more robust and protestant faith As Dr Nicol Macnicol puts it "The languor of the Hindu atmosphere is replaced by a new stingingoy, a new vigour, even if it is only in its negations, and a

more decidedly ethical outlook. It is evident again and again, as we read the sayings of this group of saints that new blood has flowed into a Hinduism of which robustness had never been the note, and which had been growing more and more anaemic." There is a virility in his views, and their expression which is new and refreshing. His influence is to be traced in a considerable number of sects, of which the largest and most noble is that of the Sikhs, founded by Kabir's most famous follower, Nanak.

#### RAMANAND'S PHILOSOPHY AND RELIGION

The Vaishnavite Saints and Reformers in all parts of India have enshrined their fervent faith in poetry and song. Their poems in most cases proceed from some inward experience and are vivid with emotion. They are mostly lyrics, radiant with verbal witcheries. "Whether they are cries of longing, or utterances of love and devotion, or endeavours to understand and explain life and destiny, these are never merely decorative in their purpose. They are primarily religious and only secondarily works of art. They are Psalms—meant to be sung, not said, and inseparable, for a full appreciation, from their music. No doubt the music helps to make up for an occasional poverty of thought and barrenness of language, but it enables them to mount and soar, and carries their message, more surely to its lodgement in the hearer's heart. They are thus true lyrics and their melancholy music makes more touching still, the simple appeal in many of them, of which we might almost say that they have no language but a cry." Such were those Psalms and songs which the poet saints of Medieval India have bequeathed to us. It is unfortunate that we do not possess any collection of Ramananda's songs. In the Granth Sahib we only find a single hymn ascribed to Ramananda. An invitation had been given him to attend a religious service of Vishnu to which he replied —

"Whither shall I go, Sir, I am happy at home  
My heart will not go with me, it hath become a cripple  
  
One day I did have an inclination to go,  
I ground sandal, took distilled aloë wood and  
many perfumes,  
  
And was proceeding to worship God in a temple,  
When my Guru showed me God in my heart  
  
Wherever I go I find only water or stones,  
But thou, O God, art equally contained in everything  
  
The Vedas and Puranas all have I seen and searched,  
Go thou thither, if God be not here  
  
O true Guru, I am a sacrifice unto thee  
Who hast cut away all my perplexities and doubts  
  
Ramananda's Lord is the all pervading God,  
The Guru's word cutteth away millions of sins "  
Macauliffe, *The Sikh Religion* Vol VI

In these lines the voice of a great spiritual teacher is plainly audible

When we turn to consider the philosophical aspects of Ramananda's doctrines, we have to go back to Ramanuja. According to Dr Nicol Macnicol, Ramanuja's is perhaps, the greatest name in the whole history of Vaishnavite development. He completed the work for Indian Theism that was begun by the author of the Bhagavad Gita, setting the corner stone up the structure and establishing it in a position of strength such as it had not previously possessed in the midst of the ebb and flow of the religious thought and feeling of India. Ramanuja's thought is in sharp conflict with that of Sankara against whom he opens up his formidable battery of argument in his introduction to the exposition of the Brahma Sutras. The great doctrine of Sankara Vedanta is the identity of Jiva with the Supreme Self. Sankara declared that this visible and tangible universe extended in space and time is a mere name and form and that the Brahma is the sole Reality. There is absolutely no difference in unity. Ramanuja took up an

entirely different attitude towards God and His relation to man and universe They are, he says, but parts of one stupendous whole The universe and all its contents, animate and inanimate, thus form a kind of body for Brahma of which He is the Self There is unity in difference or non duality qualified by the recognition that both the world and souls, while they subsist solely in and through Brahma, are nevertheless real There is, thus, a true plurality, but it inheres in an ultimate unity Did not the Upanishad say, as it depicted Brahma issuing forth from his majestic solitude that He resolved "I am alone, now may I be many"? In thus becoming many, he did not cease to be one This world can have no separate existence, apart from that Supreme Reality And this is no less true of souls They are but sparks of the heavenly home The individual soul differs indeed in essential character from the Paramatman Their relation is no absolute identity Something discriminates the part from the whole, the luminous body is different in nature from the radiance which it emits

The world and all conscious beings are qualified forms of Brahman This is how Ramanuja conceives of the relation between man and God It therefore follows necessarily that man must depend for his salvation upon the grace of God The doctrine of grace constitutes the central point of his philosophy The "Inner Ruler" discloses his own presence and designs to illuminate the prayerful heart "To those who are ever devoted and worship me with love," says Lord Krishna, "I give that knowledge by which they attain to me" All the duties of life must be assiduously performed in the spirit of Renunciation All desires for "fruit" for reward hereafter, must be abandoned The righteous deed must be humbly surrendered to God alone as its sole author Then, by the Lord's Grace mind and

heart will become pure. The worshipper seeks to realize a constant communion with his Divine Lord, until the consciousness of the sacred presence becomes clear, and the soul lifted into adoration, beholds the Majesty and mercy of the Eternal Love.

Rapt into still communion which transcends  
The imperfect offices of praise and prayer,  
His mind was a thanksgiving to the Power  
That made Him it was blessedness and love

This is the pathway of Release. Here is no loss of individuality. The bodily environment of 'name and form' is, indeed, laid aside, but its occupant enters on a loftier plane of union with the Lord. The philosophy of qualified non duality is beautifully summed up in the following lines —

Despite the absence of separateness, I am Thine,  
O Lord ! and Thou art not I  
The Waves belong to the Ocean, but the ocean is  
not the Wave

Having imbibed the inspiration of the philosophy of Ramanuja, Ramananda, the great pioneer of the Bhakti movement in Hindustan, took up the pure and chaste theme of Rama and Sita, immortalised in charming verse by the great poet Valmiki, thus weaning away people from the practice of empty rites and ceremonies, and the pursuit of weaving intellectual cob webs, and concentrating their deepest affection on God and God like men. No doubt, there is a moral grandeur about the characters of the Ramayana. Rama, a god in human form, his devoted brother Lakshmana, the tender, constant selfless Bhairat Sita, the ideal of an Indian wife and mother, Ravana, the Satan of the Epic, fighting with all his demon force against his destiny. With such a noble and chaste theme on his lips Ramananda must have

instilled into the hearts of his audience a genuinely spiritual fervour and faith. The followers of Bhakti are naturally opposed to the 'hangiri' Vedanta creed,' and hold that 'the way of faith' is higher than 'the way of knowledge.' They assert that it is necessary to appeal, on all the high concerns of man's moral and religious life, from the intellect to the heart, for out of the heart are the tissues of life.' The cult of knowledge can only be comprehended by the intellectually gifted few, while the message of Bhakti or love makes a universal appeal. Love is revelation in knowledge, inspiration in art, motive in morality, and the fulness of religious joy. "Man," said Fichte, "can will nothing but what he loves, his love is the sole and at the same time the infallible spring of his volition, and of all his life's striving and movement." A Hindu Bhakta, (like Lord Tennyson,) has always lifted up his heart in prayer, saying

#### Immortal Love

Whom we, that have not seen Thy face,  
 By faith and faith alone embrace,  
 Believing where we cannot prove,  
 Thou seemest human and divine  
 The highest, holiest manhood thou  
 Our wills are ours we know not how,  
 Our wills are ours to make them Thine

The abiding interest of the great Bhakti movement in India lies in its affirmation of the claims of the human heart and in the moral and spiritual uplift to which it has supplied a stimulus. The great saints of India have completely surrendered themselves to the ideal of love which has been "the anchor of their purest thoughts, the nurse, the guide, the guardian of the heart, and the soul of all their moral being."

## RAMANANDA'S LAST YEARS

While we may be fairly certain, says Dr. Grierson, that Ramananda was born in 1299 A.D., the date of his death is involved in some obscurity. The popular tradition is that he died in Samvat 1467 (A.D. 1410). This would give him a life of 111 years. We can accept the tradition, borne out, as it is, by the direct statement of the *Bhaktamala*, that he had an exceptionally long life and this would authorize us to state that he lived during the greater part of the fourteenth century A.D. Of Ramananda's twelve disciples, three—Kabir, Sena and Rai Dasa founded branch sects of their own. Others contented themselves with preaching the message of the master which found its fullest and most eloquent expression in the *Ramayana* of Tulsidas—a work of superb beauty—'the one Bible of a hundred millions of people.'

## KABIR

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**A**MONG the four great medieval reformers—Chaitanya (Bengal) Dnyander (Maharashtra) Kabir (Central India) and Nanak (Punjab)—Kabir, the subject of this sketch, is a remarkable character in many ways. His great courage and spirit of protestantism his supreme love and kindness to all, his fearless yet humble advocacy of pure and ennobling doctrines, above all his profound mystic poems and utterances, make him a most eminent figure in this medieval movement.

### KABIR'S BIRTH AND PARENTAGE

The date of Kabir's birth is a subject of great uncertainty, the most probable one (supported by an authentic verse) being 1440 A.D. Many a legend is told as to his birth and parentage, on none of which reliance can be placed. He was found, says a legend living as a child in the lake called Libar Talao near Benares, on a blossoming water lily, Niru, a childless Mahomedan weaver, saw, took the infant home and adopted him as his child. A Kazi was in due time called to give the child a name, the Koran was opened and a lot was cast. The word *Kabir* which means "great" in the Arabic language was the first that presented itself and the name was accordingly given to the child. All legends considered, Kabir seems to have been of Hindu parentage, though adopted and brought up as a Mahomedan.

We know very little of Kabir's early training, of the way in which his spiritual genius was kindled. That he was for a long time without a guru or teacher can be said with

certainty He, however, seems to have been of a reflective and intrepid disposition He often surprised his parents and neighbours by his queer act of love and charity and even occasional sallies of free thought But in spite of his mystic moods and utterances he followed his trade, and, at the same time, received and served holy men and mendicants

Kabir for a long time remained without a teacher This was the time when the fame of the South Indian preacher and monk Ramanand was at its height in Benares Ramanand, it will be remembered, went to Benares after his travels and there began to gather disciples with whom he often held discourses on religious topics The philosophical and theological tenets of the new faith, he preached, corresponded to a great extent to those of Ramanuja, but he added to them a new gospel of freedom, of religious and social equality He laid down as a rule that all persons of any caste who accepted the tenets and principles of his sect, might eat and drink together irrespective of birth All men who serve God are equal He thus threw his spiritual door wide open, admitted disciples of all castes, and boldly announced that *jnan* or knowledge of God emancipated men from all bondage He called his disciples the Liberated (*Avadhutas*), as he allowed them, and they accepted, a liberal interpretation of Hindu social rules sanctioned by religion At the same time, it may be noted, Ramanand vehemently opposed atheists and those who boasted that they existed independently of God

#### KABIR'S MEETING WITH RAMANAND

Kabir seems to have long desired to sit at the feet of Ramanand but, being a Mahomedan, doubted whether he would be admitted to

discipleship At last, he hit upon a very characteristic step which is narrated with great detail in his biographies One day rising early morning, he went and hid himself on the river steps of the Ganges ghat down which Ramanand used to go to his bath in the river As Ramanand came, he unknowingly trod on Kabir's head and exclaimed in his astonishment 'Ram' 'Ram' Kabir, at once rising up, fell at his feet and said "Thou hast given me the word of initiation and I am become thy disciple" Ramanand, struck with the sincerity of Kabir, accepted him Kabir ever after seems to have remained the disciple of Ramanand joining him in the theological and philosophical disputes which he carried on with the learned of the day

During the course of his life in the company of Ramanand occurred an interesting incident which throws a curious light on the peculiarly mystic bent and deep spiritual earnestness of Kabir's mind. A renowned Brahman disputant, by name Sarvajit, arrived at Benares. The pandits of Benares informed Ramanand of his arrival and told him that no one could cope in argument with the new come pandit Ramanand, however, set Kabir to argue with him. The pandit on seeing him, inquired his caste whereupon Kabir, answered that he was a weaver. The haughty pandit turned up his nose and asked what a weaver was. Kabir replied—

No one knoweth the secret of the Weaver,  
God hath woven the warp of the whole World  
If thou listen to the Vedas and the Puranas,  
Thou shalt hear, 'I have stretched the warp so long  
I have made the Earth and Firmament my workshop,  
I have set the Sun and the Moon in alternate motion,  
Working my legs I did one work'—with such a Weaver  
my heart is pleased  
The weaver hath looked into his own heart and there  
recognised God

Saint Kabir, 'I have broken up my workshop,'  
And the weaver hath blended his thread with the  
thread of God

—Macauliffe

### KABIR'S LIFE

Though some traditions try to conceal it, the fact is well proved that Kabir was a married man and the father of a family As Evelyn Underhill puts it —

It is clear that he never adopted the life of the professional ascetic or retired from the world in order to devote himself to bodily mortifications and the exclusive pursuit of the contemplative life Side by side with his interior life of adoration, its artistic expression in music and words—for he was a skilled musician as well as a poet—he lived the sane and diligent life of the Oriental craftsman All the legends agree on this point that Kabir was a weaver, a simple and unlettered man, who earned his living at the loom Like Paul the tentmaker, Boehme the cobbler, Bunyan the tinker, Tersteegen the ribbonmaker, he knew how to combine vision and industry the work of his hands helped rather than hindered the impassioned meditation of his heart Hating mere bodily austerities, he was no ascetic, but a married man, the father of a family—a circumstance which Hindu legends of the monastic type vainly attempt to conceal or explain—and it was from out of the heart of the common life that he sang his rapturous lyrics of divine love Here his works corroborate the traditional story of his life Again and again he extols the life of home, the value and reality of diurnal existence, with its opportunities for love and renunciation, pouring contempt upon the professional sanctity of the yogi 'who has a great beard and matted locks, and looks like a goat' and on all who think it necessary to flee a world pervaded love, joy and beauty—the proper theatre of man's quest—in order to find that One Reality 'who has spread His form of love throughout all the world'

### KABIR AS A PREACHER

His discipleship over, Kabir set himself to preach the doctrines he had learnt to whosoever would listen to him He soon became the centre of a large number of disciples who began to gather round him at the loom or in the

market place to listen to his songs and discourses  
But preaching as he did in the city of Benares,  
the very centre of orthodox Hinduism, his  
strange mystic doctrines, his denunciation of  
theological beliefs and ceremonial rites, brought  
down the opposition of the learned and the  
orthodox on him

O servant, where dost thou seek Me ?  
Lo ! I am beside Thee

I am neither in temple nor in mosque  
I am neither in Kaaba nor in Kailash  
Neither am I in rites andceremonies  
Nor in yoga and renunciation

If thou art a true seeker thou shalt at once see Me  
thou shalt meet me in a moment of time

Kabir says O Sadhu ! God is the breath of all breath  
There is nothing but water at the holy bathing places  
and I know that they are useless for I have bathed in them  
The images are all lifeless they canno' speak I know  
for I have cried aloud to them

The Purana and Koran are mere words lifting up the  
curtain I have seen

Kabir gives utterance to the words of experience and  
he knows very well that all other things are untrue

(Rabindranath Tagore's One Hundred Poems of Kabir)

Long not for a dwelling in Heaven and fear not to  
dwell in Hell,

What will be, will be O my soul hope not at all  
Sing the praises of God from whom the supreme  
reward is obtained

What is devotion, what penance and austerities what  
fastings and ablutions

Unless thou knowest the way to love and serve God  
Be not glad at the sight of prosperity and grieve not  
at the sight of adversity,

As is prosperity, so is adversity, What God propo eth  
shall be accomplished

Said Kabir "Through the saint, I now know in my heart,  
That the worshipper, in whose heart God dwelleth performeth  
the best worship"

If God dwell only in the mosque, to whom belongeth  
the rest of the country?

They who are called Hindus say that God dwelleth in an  
adol, I see not truth in either sect

O God, whether Allah or Ram, I live by Thy name,

O Lord show kindness unto me

Harı dwelleth in the south, Allah hath his place in  
the west

Search in Thy heart, search in the heart of hearts,  
there is His place and abode

—Macauliffe

### PERSECUTION

The opposition of the orthodox soon manifested itself in hatred and ill will. Of the many legends of the persecution that befell Kabir, a few are characteristic and deserve notice. A young and beautiful courtesan was sent to tempt Kabir, "but like the Magdalen of Biblical story, she was converted by her sudden encounter with the initiate of a higher Love." Another time, Kabir was hauled up before the Mahomedan Emperor Sikandar Lodi on a complaint of leading the people astray with false doctrines. Kabir went and stood before the Emperor and the courtiers told him to make obeisance to the monarch. Kabir replied that he was not accustomed to courts and did not know how to make prostrations, nor, he added, had he any business with the Emperor, he but knew the name of God who was the Support of his soul and the Only Sovereign of the world. The Emperor seems to have been at first provoked to anger, but, being a man of culture and knowing that Sufis of his sect were always allowed a little freedom, at last let him go in peace.

### HIS EXILE AND DEATH

Though his life was spared, in the interests of peace, he was banished from the city of Benares. "Thenceforth, he appears to have moved about amongst various cities of Northern

India, the centre of a group of disciples, continuing in exile that life of apostle and poet of love, to which, as he declares in one of his songs, he was destined 'from the beginning of time' In 1518, an old man, broken in health, and with hands so feeble that he could no longer make the music which he loved, he died at Maghar near Gorakhpur" An old verse thus speaks of his death— Kabir went to Mahār, in the Samvat year 1575 (1518 A.D.) On the eleventh day of the bright half of the month of Maghar, *his spirit blended with the spirit of the world*" All India knows the beautiful legend of Kabir's death how both Hindus and Mahomedans fought for his corpse which the one wanted to burn and the other to bury, how at last Kabir himself appeared before them in person and asked them to lift the shroud and look beneath In the place of the corpse, to their great astonishment they found a heap of flowers half of which was buried by the Mahomedans at Gorakhpur and half taken by the Hindus to Benares and burnt—'fitting conclusion,' says the author already quoted, "to a life which had made fragrant the doctrines of two great creeds" The following poem composed by Kabir on the death of the saint friend of his might well have been uttered at his own death —

Not a drop now trickles from the citadel of thy  
brain—where is the music that filled it?

The great saint hath departed with the name of the  
Supreme Brahm, the Supreme God,

O Father, whither hath departed the soul which  
dwelt with thy body?

Which revelled in divine knowledge, expounded and  
preached?

Whither hath the player gone who played the drum of  
the body?

Thy tales, thy words, thy divine instructions are no  
longer heard all thy vital energy hath been drawn away,  
the ten breaths which kept thee together have escaped  
Thou art dead, thou hast left thy friends and relatives,

Sayeth Kabir He who meditateth on God bursteth  
his bonds even when alive

—Macauliffe

#### PAINTINGS OF KABIR

The visitor to Kabir's mutt at Benares is shown what purports to be his picture Dharm Das, his chief disciple, and Shrutagopal are represented kneeling at his feet in an attitude of supplication while his son, Kamal, is seen fanning him The visitor may also see a picture of Kabir and Ravi Das, a friend and fellow disciple and townsman of his Ravi Das appears in the picture as a very attenuated old man, naked except for a red cloth round his middle, wearing a rosary in two folds round his neck and beads on wrist and arms His royal disciple, Jhali, queen of Chitore, is also seen richly dressed offering him food on a platter

#### KABIR'S RELIGION AND POETRY

The main doctrines of Kabir's creed were, as might have been seen already, based on the current Vaishnavite philosophy and religion In his hands, however, those doctrines were purged of all theological obscurity and mystic poetry unrivalled in that medieval epoch

Speaking of Kabir's concept of God, Evelyn Underhill says —

These (Kabir and other mystics) have resolved the perpetual opposition between the personal and impersonal, the transcendent and immanent, static and dynamic aspects of the Divine Nature, between the Absolute of philosophy and the "sure, true Friend" of devotional religion They have done this, not by taking these apparently incompatible aspects one after the other but by ascending to a height of spiritual intuition at which they are, as Ruysbroeck said, "melted and merged in the

Unity' and perceived as the completing opposites of a Perfect Whole. God is here felt to be not the final abstraction, but the one actuality. He inspires, supports, indeed inhabits both the durational conditional finite world of Becoming and the unconditioned, non-successional infinite world of Being, yet utterly transcends them both. He is the Omnipresent Reality, the "All Pervading within whom 'the worlds are being told like beads.' In his personal aspect, He is 'the beloved Fakir' teaching and companioning each soul. Considered as Immanent Spirit, He is "the mind within the mind". The need felt by Kabir for both these ways of describing Reality is a proof of the richness and balance of his spiritual experience which neither cosmic nor anthropomorphic symbols taken alone, could express. More absolute than the Absolute more personal than the human mind, Brahma therefore exceeds whilst He includes all the concepts of philosophy, all the passionate intuitions of the heart. He is the great Affirmation, the fount of energy the source of life and love, the unique satisfaction of desire. His creative word is the *Om* or 'Everlasting *ya*'. The negative philosophy, which strips from the Divine Nature all its attributes and—defining Him only by that which He is not—reduces Him to an "Emptiness", is abhorrent to this most vital of poets. Brahma, he says, may never be found in abstractions". He is the One love who pervades the world, discerned in His fulness only by the eyes of love, and those who know Him thus share, though they never tell, the joyous and ineffable secret of the Universe.

The following poems, rhapsodical and sublime, contain Kabir's vision of Godhead —

The light of the sun, the moon, and the stars shine bright

The melody of love swells forth, and the rhythm of love's detachment beats the time

Day and night the chorus of music fill the heavens, and Kabir says 'My Beloved One gleams like the lightning flash in thy sky'

Do you know how the moments perform their adoration?

Waving its row of lamps, the Universe sings in worship day and night

There are hidden banner and the secret canopy,

There the sound of the unseen bells is heard

Kabir says There adoration never ceases, there the Lord of the Universe sitteth on His Throne

The whole world does its works and commits its errors, but few are the lovers who know the Beloved

The devout seeker is he who mingles in his heart the double currents of love and detachment, like the mingling of the streams of Ganges and Jumna,

In his heart the sacred water flows day and night, and thus the round of births and deaths is brought to an end

Behold what wonderful rest is in the Supreme Spirit ! and he enjoys it who makes himself meet for it

Held by the cords of love, the swing of the Ocean of Joy sways to and fro and a mighty sound breaks forth in song,

See what a lotus blooms there without water, and Kabir says, "My heart's bee brinks its nectar '

What a wonderful lotus it is, that blooms at the / heart of the spinning wheel of the Universe! Only a few pure souls know of its pure delight

Music is all around, and there the heart partakes of the joy of the Infinite Sea

Kabir says "Dive thou into that Ocean of sweetness. thus let all errors of life and of death flee away "

Behold how the thirst of the five senses is quenched there and the three forms of misery are no more!

Kabir says "It is the sport of the Unattainable One, look within and behold how the moonbeams of that Hidden One shine in you "

(Tagore's One Hundred Poems of Kabir )

God constructed an inaccessible fortress for His residence  
Which He illuminated with His light  
The lightning playeth and pleasure reigneth  
Where the Youthful Lord God reposeth  
If the soul love God's name  
Man shall be released from old age and death and his doubts shall flee away

The sound of the unbeaten music is heard  
Where the Lord God reposeth  
He who fashioned continents and different countries,  
The three worlds, the three gods and the three qualities,  
Though styled Inaccessible and Invisible, dwelleth within the heart

None can find the limit or the secret of the Sustainer of the Earth ,

He shineth in the plaitain blossom and in the sunshine,  
And hath taken His dwelling in the pollen of the lotus

*God's spell is within the twelve petals of the heart  
Where the Holy Lord God reposeth*

—Macauliffe

The conception of God as the One great Love is the characteristic and most important feature of the mediæval religion Kabir, born poet as he was, realised and gave expression to this faith more vividly than any other mediæval mystic As the English critic already quoted says —

For the mere intellectualist as for the mere pietist, he (Kabir) has little approbation Love is throughout His "absolute sole Lord," the unique source of the more abundant life which he enjoys and the common factor which unites the finite and infinite worlds All is soaked in love, that love which he described in almost Johannine language as the "Form of God" The whole of creation is the play of the Eternal Lover, the living, changing, growing expression Brahma's love and joy As those twin passions preside over the generation of human life, so "beyond the mists of pleasure and pain" Kabir finds them governing the creative acts of God, His manifestation is love, His activity is joy Creation springs from one glad act of affirmation the Everlasting Yea, perpetually uttered within the depths of the Divine Nature In accordance with this concept of the universe as a Love Game which eternally goes forward, a progressive manifestation of Brahma—one of the many notions which he adopted from the common stock of Hindu religious ideas, and illuminated by his poetic genius—movement, rhythm, perpetual change forms an integral part of Kabir's vision of reality

All things are created by the Om  
The Love form is His body  
He is without form, without quality, without decay  
Seek thou union with Him!

But that formless God takes a thousand forms in the eyes of his creatures

He is pure and indestructible  
His form is infinite and fathomless  
He dances, in rapture and waves, of form arise from His dance

The body and the mind cannot contain themselves when they are touched by His great joy

He is immersed in all consciousness, all joys, and all sorrows,

He has no beginning and no end,  
*He holds all within His bliss*  
 Hark to the unstruck bell and drums!  
 Take your delight in love!

Rains pour down without water, and the rivers are streams of light

One Love it is that pervades the whole world, few there are who know it fully

They are blind who hope to see it by the light of person, that reason which is the cause of separation—

The House of Reason is very far away!

How blessed is Kabir, that amidst this great Joy he sings within his own vessel

It is the music of the meeting of soul with soul  
 It is the music of the forgetting of sorrows

It is the music that transcends all coming in and all going forth

Dance my heart! dance to day with joy

The strains of love fill the days and the nights with music and the world is hating to its melodies

Mad with joy, life and death dance to the rhythm of this music The hills and the sea and the earth dance The world of man dances in laughter and tears

Why put on the robe of the monk and live aloof from the world in lonely pride?

Behold! my heart dances in the delight of a hundred acts, and the Creator is well pleased,

(Rabindranath Tagore's One Hundred Poems of Kabir)

A cardinal doctrine of the mediaval Vaishnavism was the dualistic relation of God and soul

For the thorough-going Monist the soul, in so far as it is real, is substantially identical with God, and the true object of existence is the making patent of this latent identity the realisation which finds expression in the Vedantist formula That art thou! But Kabir says that Brahma and the creature are ever distinct yet ever united, that the wise man knows the spiritual as well as the material world to "be no more than His footstool" The soul's union with him is a love union, a mutual inhabitation that essentially dualistic relation which all mystical religion expresses, not a self-morgence which leaves no place for personality This eternal distinction, the mysterious union in separateness of God and the soul, is a necessary doctrine of all sane mysticism, for no scheme which fails

to find a place for it can represent more than a fragment of that soul's intercourse with the spiritual world. Its affirmation was one of the distinguishing features of the Vaishnavite reformation preached by Ramanuja, the principle of which had descended through Ramananda to Kabir.

The following poem expresses the doctrine —

When He himself reveals himself, Brahma brings into manifestation that which can never be seen.

As the seed is in the plant as the shade is in the tree, as the void is in the sky, as infinite forms are in the void,

So from beyond the Infinite, the Infinite comes, and from the Infinite extends

*The creature is in Brahma and Brahma is in the creature  
They are ever distinct yet ever united*

He Himself is the tree, the seed and the germ  
He Himself is the flower the fruit and the shade  
He Himself is the sun, the light and the lighted.  
He Himself is Brahma Creature and Maya  
He Himself is the manifold form, the infinite space,  
He is the breath, the word and the meaning,  
He himself is the limit and the limitless and beyond both  
the limited and the limitless is He, the Pure Being  
He is the Immanent Mind in Brahma and the creature  
The Supreme Soul is seen within the soul,  
The point is seen within the Supreme Soul,  
And within the Point, the reflection is seen again  
Kabir is blest because he has this supreme vision !

(Tagore's *One Hundred Poems of Kabir*)

The path of attaining God who is all Love and Joy lies not through ceremonies or rites or worship

A God who is all love can be worshipped only in love Kabir says in a remarkable poem — !

O sadhu ! the simple union is the best

Since the day when I met my Lord, there has been no end to the sport of our love

I shut not my eyes, I close not my ears, I do not mortify my body,

I see with eyes open and smile, and behold His beauty everywhere

I utter His Name, and whatever I see reminds me of Him, whatever I do, it becomes His worship The rising and the setting are one to me, all contradictions are

solved Wherever I go, I move round Him, all I achieve-  
is His service

When I lie down, I lie prostrate at His feet  
He is the only Adorable one to me, I have none other,  
My tongue has left off impure words, it sings His  
glory day and night

Whether I rise or sit down, I can never forget Him  
for the rhythm of His music beats in my ears

Kabir says "My heart is frenzied, and I disclose in  
my soul what is hidden I am immersed in that One great  
Bliss which transcends all pleasure and pain "

The "simple union," this worship in love and  
in faith, is the theme of many an impassioned and  
beautiful poem of Kabir In varied metaphors  
drawn from Indian life and poetry—the migrant  
swan, the lotus, the bridegroom, and the bride—  
he describes the yearning and love for God The  
tenderness and poetry and the rich imagery of  
these poems are unmatched in Indian literature —

To Thee, Thou hast drawn my love, O Fakir !

I was sleeping in my own chamber and Thou didst  
awaken me, striking me with Thy voice, O Fakir ,

I was drowning in the deeps of the ocean of this world  
and Thou didst save me, upholding me with Thine arm, O Fakir !

Only one word and no second and Thou hast made me tear  
off all my bonds, O Fakir , Kabir says 'Thou hast united Thy  
heart to my heart, O Fakir !'

"Dear friend, I am eager to meet my Beloved ' my  
youth has flowered, and the pain of separation from Him  
troubles my breast

Where the rhythm of the world rises and falls, thither  
my heart has reached

There the hidden banners are fluttering in the air,

Kabir says my heart is dying though it lives

I played day and night with my comrades, and now  
I am greatly afraid

So high is my Lord's palace, my heart trembles to mount  
its stairs yet I must not be shy, if I would enjoy His love

My heart must cleave to my Lover I must withdraw my  
veil, and meet him with all my body

Mine eyes must perform the ceremony of the lampa  
of love

Kabir says 'Listen to me, friend he understands who loves If you feel not love's longing for your Beloved One, it is vain to adorn your body, vain to put unguent on your eyelids "

The shadows of evening fall thick and deep and the darkness of love envelops the body and the mind

Open the window to the west and be lost in the sky of love,  
Drink the sweet honey that steeps the petals of the lotus of the heart

Receive the waves in your body what splendour is in the region of the sea

I am wandering yet in the alleys of knowledges without purpose but I have received His news in these alleys of knowledge

I have a letter from my Beloved in this letter is an unutterable message, and now my fear of death is done away

Kabir says 'O my loving friend ' I have got for my gift the Deathless One '

This day is dear to me above all other days for to day the Beloved Lord is a guest in my house,

My chamber and my courtyard are beautiful with His presence

My longings sing His Name and they are become lost in His great beauty I wash His feet and I look upon His Face and I lay before Him as an offering my body my mind and all that I have

What a day of gladness is that day in which my Beloved who is my treasure comes to my house All evils fly from my heart when I see my Lord

'My love has touched Him , my heart is longing for the Name which is Truth '

Thus sings Kabir the servant of all servants

I hear the melody of His flute and I cannot contain myself

The flower blooms though it is not spring , and already the bee has received its invitation

The sun roars and the lightning flashes, the waves arise in my heart

The rain falls , and my heart longs for my Lord

Hark ! the sounds of conches and bells are rising

Kabir says 'O brother, behold ! the Lord is in this vessel of my body "

(Rabindranath Tagore's One Hundred Poems of Kabir )

I turned my body into a dyer's vat and then dyed my heart therein , the five virtues I made my marriage guests,

With God, I made my marriage circumambulations my soul being dyed with his love

Sing, sing O ye brideswomen, the marriage song,  
The Sovereign God hath come to my house as my Husband  
I made the bridal pavilion in the lotus of my heart,  
and divine knowledge the recitation of my lineage

I obtained God as my Bridegroom, so great hath been  
my good fortune

Demi Gods, men, saints and the thirty three crores of  
Gods in their chariots came as spectators

Saih Kabir "The one God, the Divine Male, hath wed  
and taken me with Him "

---Macauliffe

Some more poems, embodying the intense love  
and mysticism of Kabir may be quoted here —

How could the love between Thee and me sever ?  
As the leaf of the lotus abides on the water so Thou  
art my Lord and I am Thy servant

As the night bird chakor gazes all night at the moon,  
so Thou art my Lord and I am Thy servant

From the beginning until the ending of time, there  
is love between Thee and me , and how shall such  
love be extinguished ?

Kabir says "As the river enters into the ocean, so  
my heart touches Thee '

More than all else do I cherish at heart that love  
which makes me to live a limitless life in this world

It is like the lotus, which lives in the water and blooms  
in the water yet, the water cannot touch its petals, these  
open beyond its reach

It is like a wife who enters the fire at the bidding of love  
She burns and lets others grieve, yet never dishonours love

(Rabindranath Tagore's One Hundred Poems of Kabir )

Though I have assumed many shapes, this is my last  
The strings and wires of the musical instrument are all  
worn out , I am now in the power of God's name ,  
I shall not have again to dance to the tune of birth and death ,  
Nor shall my heart accompany on the drum ,  
I have taken and destroyed my bodily lust and anger ,  
Lust's raiment hath grown old, and all my doubts  
are dispelled

I recognise one God in all creatures      vain wranglings on  
thus subject are at an end

Saint Kabir 'When God was gracious unto me, I obtained Him the Perfect One'

Turning away from the worlds I have forgotten both caste and lineage,

My weaving is now in the Infinite Silence  
 I have now no quarrel with any one,  
 I have given up both the Pandits and the Mullahs  
 I weave clothes and wear them myself  
 Where I see no pride, there I sing God's praises  
 What the Pandits and Mullahs prescribed for me  
 I have received no advantage from and have abandoned  
 My heart being pure I have seen the Lord  
 Kabir having searched and searched himself, hath  
 found God within him

(Macauliffe's *Sikhism*)

#### KABIR'S WORKS

The works of Kabir, from which the poems quoted above have been extracted and translated by various writers, are of a numerous and varied character. They are mostly, however, collections of songs composed in the various metres of old Hindi. An exhaustive list of Kabir's works as contained in the collection known as *Khas Grantha* or the Book, preserved at Kabir's *Chaura* in Benares, is given by Wilson in his 'Religion of the Hindus' (Vol I p 76). The chief and celebrated works are the *Bijah*, the *Sukhnidhan* and a number of collections called *Sabdas*, *Sakhis*, *Rehitas*, *Mangal*, *Vasant*, *Holi* etc., "there are also a variety of stanzas, called *Agams* etc., imposing a very formidable course of study on those who wish to go deep into the doctrines of this school and one in which the greatest proficients amongst the Kabirpanthis are but imperfectly versed. A few *Sakhis*, *Sabdas*, *Rehitas*, with the greater portion of the *Bijah*, constitute their acquirements."

The author or compiler of *Bijah* was Bhagodas, one of Kabir's immediate disciples, it is the great authority on all the religious matters and doctrines among the Kabirpanthis in general. "It is written in very harmonious verse and with great ingenuity

of illustration, its style however is more dogmatical than argumentative and it rather inveighs against other systems than explains its own " *Sukhnidhan* " is more venerated as it is taught only to those pupils whose studies are considered to approach perfection. Wilson considers *Sukhnidhan* as being exceedingly clear and intelligible. In these reputed works and collections of Kabir, there appear to be numerous shlokas and poems which perhaps were not written or composed by Kabir. Recently one or two critical editions of Kabir's works have appeared.

#### THE KABIRPANTHIS

Though Kabir never aimed at founding a sect, but, like all true mystics and reformers, only tried to instil into men true faith and knowledge of God his followers soon formed themselves into a sect. In spite of their smallness in numbers and their sectarian character, these Kabirpanthis still preserve vestiges of their original founder and his teachings, and the following account given by Wilson in his " Religion of the Hindus " of the religion and present condition of the Kabirpanthis may be read with interest —

Though the *Kabirpanthis* have withdrawn, in such a very essential point as worship from the Hindu communion they still preserve abundant vestiges of their primitive source, and their notions are in substance the same as those of the Puranic sects especially of the Vaishnava division. They admit of but one God the creator of the world, and in opposition to the Vedanta notions of the absence of every quality and form, they assert that He has a body formed of the five elements of matter and that he has a mind endowed with the three *gunas* or qualities of being, of course of ineffable purity and irresistible power. He is free from the defects of human nature in all other respects. He does not differ from man and the pure man, the *sadhu* of the Kabir sect, is His living resemblance and after death is His associate and equal. He is eternal, without end or beginning. God and man are not only the same but that they are both in the same manner everything that lives and moves and has its being. Other sects have adapted these phrases literally, but the followers of Kabir do not mean by them to deny the individuality of being.

and only intend these texts as assertions of all nature originally participating in common elementary principles

It is no part of their faith to worship the Hindu deity or to observe any of the rites or ceremonials of the Hindus, whether orthodox or schismatrical such of their members as are living in the world conform outwardly to all the usages of their tribe and caste and some of them even pretend to worship the usual divinities Those however who have abandoned the fetters of society abstain from all the ordinary practices and address their homage chiefly in chanting hymns exclusively to the invisible Kabir they use no *mantra* nor fixed form of salutation they have no peculiar mode of dress The frontal marks, if worn are usually those of the Vaishnava sects or they make a streak with sandal or gopichandan along the ridge of the nose a necklace and a rosary of *tulas* beads are also worn by them

The moral code of the *Kabirpanthis* is short, but, if observed faithfully, is of a rather favourable tendency Life is the gift of God and must not, therefore be violated by His creatures, Humanity is consequently a cardinal virtue and the shedding of blood whether of man or animal, a heinous crime Truth is the other great principle of their code Retirement from the world is desirable

The last great point is the usual sum and substance of every sect amongst the Hindus—implicit devotion in word, act and thought to the Guru in this, however, the characteristic spirit of the *Kabirpanthis* appears, and the pupil is enjoined to scrutinize the teacher's doctrines and acts to be first satisfied that he is the sage that he pretends to be, before he resigns himself to his control This sect is indeed, remarkably liberal in this respect, and the most frequently recurring texts of Kabir are those which enforce an attentive examination of the doctrine that he offers to his disciples The chief of each community has absolute authority over his dependants, the only punishments he can award, however, are moral, not physical.

There is no doubt that the *Kabirpanthis*, both clerical and lay, are very numerous in all the Provinces of Upper and Central India except, perhaps, in Bengal, the Quaker like spirit of the sect, their abhorrence of all violence, their regard for truth, and the unobtrusiveness of their opinions render them very inoffensive members of the State—their mendicants also never solicit alms and in this capacity even they are less obnoxious than the many religious vagrants whom the rank soil of Hindu superstition and the energetizing operation of an Indian climate so plentifully engender

# N A N A K

## INTRODUCTION

O F the several religious sects that arose in mediæval India, none has attracted greater attention or been more widely studied than the school of Sikhism founded by the Khatri mystic and poet, Nanak. The political and military greatness, to which as a nation the Sikhs attained is to some extent at the bottom of this widespread admiration and study. The achievements in war and politics which the small community of the Sikhs made in the short space of a century and a half or two, are indeed some of the most remarkable and brilliant that have ever been recorded of any small and brave community in the world. But the political and military story apart, the Sikh religion, founded on the hymns and teachings of one of the gentlest and most mystical of mediæval Indian teachers, is interesting and valuable as one of the purest protestant faiths that arose in the middle ages in India.

Discarding all superstitions that had accumulated in the course of centuries, the Sikh religion established the worship of the "One Great and True Being." It condemned pilgrimages and rites and temple worship as not only useless but as a hindrance to true religion, and preached in their place a pure and ennobling worship by means of prayer and true love and good, virtuous acts. It gave a high place to ethics and morality. Equality of human rights was established, none being high or low in the eyes of God. The social and reforming effects of a religion like this could not but be great. A rude and scattered community

peasants and hillmen became a strong and well-knit brotherhood united by a common and enabling faith. A race of primitive and untutored men became a heroic nation, possessed of a strong and individual religious faith and fired with ideals of moral courage and independence.

The chronicles of the life of the original founder, Nanak, are numerous. The earliest chronicle may be said to be almost contemporary, being written in the time of one of the early Gurus. The later chronicles were but amplifications of this early one too often ornamented with extra ordinary legends and miracles. The sketch given in the following pages is based upon the earlier chronicle, translated fully by Dr. A. D. Trumpp in his book, the *Adi Granth*. The story is told with a great deal of simplicity and truth, and forms very commendable and interesting reading.

#### NANAK'S BIRTH AND PARENTAGE

Nanak, the founder of the Sikh religion, was born in the month of Baisakh (April—May) 1469 A.D. in the village of Talwandi, Lahore District, the Punjab. He was a Khatri by caste. His father was Kalu, the accountant of the village, who also pursued the life of an agriculturist, and his mother was Tripta, memorable in Sikh writings for the devotion to her son. Nanak appears even in his childhood to have been of a mystic disposition and much given to contemplation. He was early put to school, but he often surprised his schoolmaster and parents by his queer acts and utterances and occasional sallies of free thought. The Khatri father was put to much concern at the spiritual prepossessions and mystic brooding spirit of his son and tried to wean him from his religious habits. He set the youth various secular tasks—to the looking after the cultivation of the fields, to the carrying on of a little trade. But Nanak proved averse to

them all He paid little attention to his father's admonition or persuasion He began to pass more and more of his time in religious contemplation and practices He gathered a few friends around him and with them sang and composed hymns in praise of the Creator

Under the stress of this life of physical and mental exertion, Nanak's health too seems to have been affected somewhat The loving parents sent for a physician Nanak accosted the physician with a mystic outburst

The physician is sent for to prescribe a remedy he taketh my hand and feeleth my pulse

The ignorant physician knoweth not that it is in my mind that the pain is

Physician, go home take not my curse with thee,

I am imbued with my Lord to whom givest thou medicine?

When there is pain, the physician standeth ready with a store of medicine

The body is weeping, the soul crieth out 'Physician, give none of thy medicine,'

Physician, go home few I know my malady

The Creator, who gave me this pain, will remove it'

\* \* \* \*

I feel first the pain of separation from God, then pang of hunger for contemplation of Him

I also feel the pain which Death's powerful myrmidons may inflict I feel pain that my body shall perish by disease

O ignorant physician! give me no medicine

Such medicine as thou hast, my friend removeth not the pain I feel or the continued suffering of my body

I forgot God and devoted myself to pleasure then this bodily illness beset me the wicked heart is punished

Ignorant physician, give me no medicine As sandal is useful when it exhaleth perfume,

A man is useful as long as he hath breath in his body

So when the breath departeth, the body crumbleth away and becometh useless

No one taketh medicine after that When man possesseth even a portion of the Name of the Bright One.

His body shall become like gold and his soul be made pure,

All his pain and disease shall be dispelled,  
And he shall be saved, Nanak, by the True Name"

#### NANAK'S EDUCATION

Though some of the mystics and the reformers of this epoch were unlettered men, Nanak cannot be strictly classed with them. In his village school to which he was sent in his childhood, he should have learnt the elements of reading and writing, and something of Hindi and his native dialect. His poems, which are written in a Hindi dialect prevalent at the time reveal Nanak's acquaintance with and good mastery of this language. There is also proof from the internal evidence of his own compositions that Guru Nanak had studied the Persian language. Rai Bular promised that, if Nanak learned Persian, in which all State documents and accounts were then written, he would appoint him village accountant in succession to his father. Nanak, like other Hindus of the time, might therefore have applied himself to the study of the same. There are numerous Persian words and some Persian verses of the Guru found in the *Granth* and it may be accepted as a fact that he became a fair Persian scholar. It is also highly probable that his mysticism and divine love may have been kindled and inspired to some extent by the great works of the Sufi mystics in the Persian literature.

The real culture and education of Nanak should however be looked for in another quarter. All that he learnt from the school and the books was little, compared with what he should have learnt in his wanderings wherein he met

with large numbers of the contemporary *bhaktas* and preachers. The names of the men with whom Nanak associated are lost to us. The company of these men, along with his own soul and with the Creator, should have filled him with those great spiritual ideas and intuitions which led him to found a great sect. The voice that had already spoken, to many a seer and mystic of Northern India now again became vocal to the Khatri youth of Talwandi.

#### MARRIAGE AND EMPLOYMENT

Nanak had a sister, Nanaki by name. She was married to one Jai Ram, an *amil* or collector of revenue under the Mahomedan Governor, employed at Sultanpur. Nanak also was married soon after his sister's marriage. His wife was Sulakhani, daughter of Mula, a resident of Batala in the present District of Gurdaspur. Two sons were born to Nanak. Marriage and the birth of children, however, failed to divert him. Paying no regard to his household, he still daily betook to the woods and lonely places, and there in the company of his friends, prayed and sang hymns to the Creator. Jai Ram, during his yearly official visits to Talwandi, had ample opportunities of cultivating Nanak's acquaintance and appreciating his qualities. Rai Bular too, the Zemindar of Talwandi, was an advocate of Nanak. It was therefore agreed between them that the thoughtful youth was being ill treated by his father, and Jai Ram promised to cherish him and find him occupation at Sultanpur. The thought of Government employ for his son filled the father Kalu's heart with joy and he gladly parted with his son. Jai Ram introduced Nanak as an educated man to the Governor, Daulat Khan, who appointed him storekeeper and gave him a dress of honour as a preliminary of

service Nanak began to apply himself to his work. Out of the provisions which Guru Nanak was allowed—for State salary was then given in kind—he devoted only a small portion to his own maintenance, the rest he gave away to the poor.

The minstrel, Mardana, came from Talwandi and became Nanak's private servant, friend and companion in devotion. He used to accompany Nanak on the rebeck when the latter sang. Other friends too followed for whom Nanak found employment under the Governor. When their work for the days was over, Nanak and his friends, Mardana the rebeck player being the chief of them, repaired to some neighbouring solitude and there spent their time in singing and prayer.

#### ASCETICISM AND WANDERINGS

Nanak, however, could not rest happy in his secular life. He resolved to devote himself to his mission. He abandoned his service, and, having distributed his earthly goods amongst the poor, took up his abode in the jungle and assumed the garb and the manner of a fakir. Here he practised all the austeries of his holy calling and began to give utterance to those inspired songs afterwards collected and preserved in the *Adi Granth*, the sacred book of the Sikhs. His sole companion was his faithful servant and disciple, Mardana, who attended on him in all his subsequent wanderings. Mardana was a skilled musician, and morning and evening sang his master's songs to the accompaniment of the rebeck.

Nanak, however, did not remain long in the neighbourhood of Sultanpur. He began to wander forth among the various cities of Northern India and even outside India, teaching

his gospel, making disciples and disputing with the holy men of every caste and creed. He first proceeded to Sayyidpur in the Gujranwala District where he stayed in the house of Lalo, the carpenter. He next went to Kurukshetra and Hardwar in the latter of which took place an interesting episode which throws light on Nanak's protestant spirit and hatred of superstition. The Brahmans and pilgrims were offering ablutions of water with their faces turned towards the east. Nanak went amongst them, and taking large handfuls of water, threw them in the direction of the west. The Brahmans were surprised and asked Nanak as to what he meant. Nanak asked them, "What is your object please?" They replied, "We are offering ablutions unto the manes." "Where are they?" queried Nanak. The Brahmans replied, "Thousands of miles away." Nanak replied, "My village is situated in the west. So I throw water towards the west. If your handfuls of water can reach the manes thousands of miles away why not mine reach the fields lying only some ten miles off?"

Nanak then went to Brindaban and to Benarss where he seems to have disputed with the worshippers of the various Hindu divinities. It is recorded that, at Benares, Nanak converted a Brahman Pundit by name Chatur Das to his faith. He then travelled to Puri and even farther south as far as Ceylon and returned to his native place after an absence of nearly twelve years.

Nanak is also credited with having made a journey to Mecca and the western countries.

#### BABAR'S INVASION

During his second wandering, while Nanak was at Sayyidpur, news of Babar's invasion

reached the city Mardana was seized with anxiety and spoke of it to his master Some days after, Babar came and assaulted and sacked the city Nanak and Mardana were seized and imprisoned and placed under the custody of Mir Khan, an officer of Babar's army The ascetic captives were condemned to do work, Nanak carried loads on his head, while Mardana was forced to work with the broom While the two were thus at work, some women were being driven along shrieking and weeping, Mardana turned to his master and he sang —

They who wore beautiful tresses and the partings of whose hair were dyed with vermillion

Have their locks now shorn with the scissors and dust is thrown upon their heads

They dwelt in private chambers, now they cannot find a seat in public

Hail! Father, Hail! O Primal Being, Thy limit is not known Thou makest and beholdest the different phases of existence

\* \* \* \*

They had hundreds of thousands waiting on them while sitting, and hundreds of thousands waiting on them while standing Eating cocoanuts and dates, they sported on couches

But now chains are on their necks and broken are their strings of pearls

The wealth and beauty which afforded them pleasure have now become their bane

The order was given to the soldiers to take and dishonour them

If it please God, He giveth greatness and if it please Him, He giveth punishment

If they had thought of Him before, why should they have received punishment?

But they had lost all thought of God in joys, in spectacles and in pleasures,

When Babar's rule was proclaimed, no Pathan prince ate his food

Some lost their five times of prayer, others their honour of worship

How shall Hindu women now bathe and apply their frontal marks without their sacred squares?

They who never thought of Ram are not now allowed even to mention Khuda

One may return to her home, another may meet and inquire after the safety of a relation. But others are destined to sit and weep in pain

*What pleasest God, O Nanak, shall happen—What is man?"*

It was not long before Nanak came in personal contact with the Emperor. Many stories are told of the Guru's influence on the life and conduct of Babar, and one or two deserve to be recorded. When Babar destroyed the town of Eminabad and the neighbouring villages there was a general massacre of the people and Pathan as well as Hindu habitations were plundered and levelled to the ground. It is said that the Guru not approving this sort of zulum managed to secure an interview with Babar, who hearing of his pious movements in the prison, had rather himself desired to see him. The Guru's words had such a magic effect on his mind that he showed him a special respect while all his courtiers saluted him. The Emperor asked him to accept a present from him. The Guru replied that he wanted nothing for himself, but requested that the captives of Eminabad might be released. Upon this the Emperor ordered that they should be set free and their properties restored to them. His Majesty was so pleased with the Guru that he asked him to accompany him. The Guru at first promised to remain only one day with him, but on being pressed to remain three days he at last consented. But he was always distressed as he looked towards the prisoners. Once he was so affected that he fell into a trance and became unconscious. Babar was alarmed, and when the Guru stood

up he prayed him to be gracious to him. The Guru replied, "If thou, O, Emperor, desirest kindness, set all they captives free" Babar agreed and the Guru said, "Thy Empire shall remain for a long time" His Majesty on this ordered that all his prisoners should be clothed with robes of honour, a matter which caused the Guru much pleasure and satisfaction. Then the Emperor asked for instructions and the Guru said, "Deliver just judgments, reverence holy men, forswear wine and gambling. The monarch who indulgeth in these vices shall, if he survive, bewail his misdeeds. Be merciful to the vanquished, and worship God in spirit and in truth"

Needless to say that Babar did value and follow all this in his future life and history bears abundant testimony to this. But for those who have read of Babar's power, influence and formidableness, the patriotic part played by the Guru does not stand in need of comments. He met the most terrible man on earth, a wink of whose brow was a sufficient order for putting millions to the sword and by his able intercession turned him into the kindest ruler. This was the service that the Guru rendered to his country and countrymen. When Babar invited the Guru to ask what favour he desired from him, the Conqueror of India, the latter replied

It is the one God who hath commissioned me  
 Every one partaketh of His gifts,  
 He who looketh for human support,  
 Loseth both this world and the next  
 There is but one Giver, the whole world are beggars  
 They who forsake Him and attach themselves to others  
 lose all their honor  
 Kings and Emperors are all made by him  
 Saith Nanak, hear Emperor Babar  
 He who beggeth of Thee is a fool

This was the time when the new Vaishnavite faith of South India was being vigorously propagated by various South Indian monks and preachers in the several parts of Northern and Central India. A great poet and reformer had already risen, the whole land, wherever the Hindi language was spoken, was ringing with the impassioned lyrics and intrepid utterances of Kabir. He proclaimed the Oneness and Unity of God, he defined His Nature as Love. God he declared, is at once Absolute, Universal, One without a second, and also the Friend and Companion of each soul. The path to Him was simple it lay through faith and devotion. Further, all are equal there is none high or low with God. God is accessible to the "self-righteous holy man". Nanak then in his wanderings, might have imbibed this new religion with its great simplicity, its notions of One Absolute and Loving God and equal human rights. There is no doubt that it was the tradition of this connection and indebtedness that, half a century later, led to the incorporation of a large number of the hymns of Kabir and other Vaishnavite preachers in the *Granth* compiled by Arjun.

#### SETTLING AT KHARATPUR

Towards the close of his life Nanak laid aside the habits and garb of a fakir, and settled down with his family at Kharatpur. His friend Mardana also came to live with him, but, wearied with travel and with years, he died a short time after settling at Kharatpur. His son succeeded to his father's function, and assisted with his music in the prayers of Nanak. To the end of the latter's life Nanak continued to preach his gospel, and every day the *Jappi* and the *Sohila*, the morning and the evening prayers, which he himself had composed were

chanted in his presence Large numbers of followers gathered round him He organised them all together and taught them the new faith by word and by precept His disciples often made him offerings of coin or of kind and the old saint built alms houses and gave charities out of them The picture that is preserved in the Sikh writings of these last days and of his teachings is a most beautiful and touching one In spite of his increasing fame and influence, he did not arrogate to himself any extraordinary greatness or power He humbly preached to all the new religion, and said that he was himself a man among men, sinful and mortal as they were, that God was all in all and reliance on Him was the "one thing needful" "Think, pray and praise Him always The just shall live by faith alone A teacher hath no defence but the purity of his doctrine" He enjoined on all men to live righteously, and with brotherly love and hospitality, and to abjure all superstitions and fear Falsehood is at an end, Truth at last prevaleth Worship not the dead, bow not to stones" At last when death drew near, he appointed one of his most sincere disciples to look after the community of the faithful that was forming, passing over his own son whom he thought unfit for the task Nothing demonstrates the selflessness and the nobility of Nanak better than this appointment of Angad in preference to his own son His death came at last in the year 1538 A D at the age of 69.

#### NANAK'S DESCENDANTS

Nanak's line of the Bedi clan through his younger son has been preserved to the present day During these four hundred years they have been held in much veneration by all the Sikhs, trusted and protected in stormy times out of regard for their ancestor

### SIKHISM AND ITS SOURCES

The teachings of Nanak have been considered by some to have been influenced by foreign religions and thought, and to have little in common with the doctrines and philosophy of Hinduism. The learned translator of the *Adi Granth*, Dr. Trumpp, discussing the notions embodied in Sikhism, finds in them a late echo of the old Buddhism. Other critics have gone so far as to assert that Nanak might have owed some of his doctrines to Christian sources. Nothing however could be farther from the truth. It would be misreading history and Sikhism alike to suppose that the latter was born of any extraneous influence of religion. Could one but inform oneself of the systems of thought that were current in Northern India at the time, could one but pursue the clue furnished by the names and hymns of the Hindi Bhagabats (Vaishnava Mystics) occurring in the *Granth*, one would find that the doctrines and teachings of Nanak, like those of the other great reformer, Kabir, to whom he bears a great similarity in character and teaching alike, were chiefly derived from the contemporary Vaishnavite schools of thought.

Kabir and Nanak no doubt differed in an important particular from the reformers of Bengal and the saints of Maharashtra. The training and ideas of the latter lay more among the orthodox traditions and learning of Hinduism. Their teachings were therefore based on the accredited scriptures and systems of the land. Kabir and Nanak, while accepting their theological and spiritual principles—their notions of God and soul and devotion—base the authority and source of their faith, not in the *Shruti*s and the *Smritis*, but in the heart of man, its intuitions and longings. This difference in view had led to important distinctions which make the sects founded.

by these two men eminent in some ways But otherwise, Sikhism and the religion of Kabirpanthis remain the most characteristic survivals of mediæval Vaishnavism

Whether the South Indian Vaishnavism, which spread to the North through its monks and preachers, was accepted in all technical and theological completeness by the North Indian reformers is a question which is not perhaps of interest except to the sectarian Vaishnava. What is more important, historically speaking, is that the Vaishnavite creed, spreading to the North of India, became the basis of a new Religion of Love and Faith, that it gave rise to a system of ethics at once deep and exalted, that inspired ideals of social and political freedom such as no previous faith of India had done. In the darkness and terror of the middle ages, it helped to shed a ray of light and faith on the homes and hearts of the people. In the ages of oppression and foreign rule, it helped to draw men together and form them into political federations which ultimately grew into empires and republics.

The following is an analysis of the tenets of Sikhism by Dr Trumpp —

We can distinguish a grosser and finer kind of Pantheism. The grosser Pantheism identifies all things with the Absolute, the universe in its various forms being considered the expansion of it. The finer Pantheism on the other hand distinguishes between the Absolute and the finite Being and borders frequently on Theism. Though God is producing all things out of Himself and is filling all, yet he remains distinct from the creatures and is not contaminated by the Maya, as a lotus in a pond of water remains distinct from the water surrounding it. The Supreme is in its essence Light the All Engineering Vital Power which, though diffused into all creatures, remains distinct from them, the material bodies are dissolved again into atoms whereas the emanated light is re absorbed into the Fountain of light. In this finer shade of Pantheism creation assumes the form of Emanation from the Supreme (as in the system of the

Sufis), the atomic matter is either likewise considered co eternal with the Absolute and immanent in it, becoming moulded into various distinct forms by the energising vigour of the Absolute, or the reality of matter is more or less denied so that the Divine is the only real essence in all That an Absolute Being, thus defined, cannot be a self conscious spirit, endowed with a free will and acting according to theological principles seems never to have struck their minds For after the strongest pantheistic expressions the Supreme is again addressed as a self conscious Personality who governs all things and takes care of all creatures and with whom man endeavours to enter into personal relations *Contra dictory sentences of this kind we find a great many in the Granth* To this personification of the Supreme it is owing that intellectual and moral qualities are frequently ascribed to Him, though, strictly speaking, there is no room for them in this system He is called very wise, acquainted with the secrets of the hearts (or the inward Governor), not deceivable, kind to His devotees merciful, just, etc, In other places, qualities are attributed to Him which are contradictory to each other and which clearly show that they are to be taken in a particular sense "

Really there can be no truer analysis than this of the doctrines of the medieval orthodox Vaisnavism

#### NANAK'S RELIGION AND POETRY

"There is but one God whose name is true, the Creator" These are the first words of the *Granth Sahib* and they epitomise the teaching of the whole book This fundamental truth, the unity of the Supreme Spirit, Nanak made the basis of his doctrine God is one, He is the God, not of the Hindu, not of the Mussulman, not of the Christian, but of mankind Under whatever name He is worshipped—Jehovah, Allah or Ram—He is "the One, Invisible, Eternal, Uncreated" Knowledge of God is the most important of all knowledge It is not for the Brahman alone but for all, and all have a right to seek it for themselves Similarly the worship of God is not the exclusive privilege of the priesthood, it is a service in which every man has an equal right to participate, a duty which

cannot be performed by one man on behalf of another. It must be in truth and simplicity and devotion, and needs neither incense nor burnt offerings, nor sacrifice.

These notions of Godhead and true worship and service are preached in a series of most beautiful and mystic poems, the most sublime of which all is that long one, the *Japji*, composed by Nanak in his old age, and still sung by every Sikh at daybreak. It is a majestic poem describing the unity, power and beauty of God and the need of man's devotion and love.

Of Him the One True Name is Om,  
Creator all pervading He  
Dvoid of hate and fear, unborn,  
Lauding, self existent Lord

He can be reached by only those  
Who on the Guru wait for help  
O Thou Who seekest after Him,  
To Him alone thy worship give

He in the beginning did live,  
He was before Time came to be,  
He, verily, existeth now,  
He shall exist for evermore

Him I cannot by thinking know,  
For ages though I think on Him  
Nor even by silence deep, though  
I in centred self absorption live

The hungry\* are not satisfied  
Though they obtain the universe,  
And of the countless means devised,  
Not one doth help in finding Him

How shall a man the True One know?  
How shall he falsehood's barriers break  
He can, as Nanak foreordained  
By keeping His Divine commands  
By His command which none can know,  
All bodies into being come  
By His command spring living things  
And at His bidding glory's gained

---

\* God hungry,

By His command the high, the low,  
 And pain and pleasure are ordained  
 By His command are some absolved,  
 And some to endless births are doomed

All subjects are to His commands,  
 And no one is from them exempt  
 Who His commandments understands  
 Is, Nanak, from all selfness free

Some sing His pow'r, for their's the gift,  
 His bounties some who know His signs,  
 Some hymn His attributes, His might,  
 And some, His knowledge travail gained

Some sing to Him, for He creates,  
 And then destroys corporeal forms,  
 Some sing to Him, for He doth take,  
 And at His pleasure gives back life

Some sing to Him believing He  
 Is manifest, yet far away,  
 Some praise Him for He seeth all,  
 And some for He's Omnipresent

There is, indeed, no limit set  
 To human speech and thoughts of Him  
 By countless men in countless ways  
 He is described but fruitlessly,

So lavish are His gifts that men  
 Receiving them aweary grow  
 From age to age His creatures have  
 Received their meat and drink from Him

He, the Commander, ordereth  
 By His decree this world's affairs  
 And unconcerned, O Nanak, He,  
 The Lord, exulteth in His pow'er

True is the Lord, true is His name,  
 If uttered with endless love,  
 Unceasingly men ask from Him,  
 And from His hands, receive rich gifts

What shall we offer in return  
 That we may in His Presence stand ?  
 What shall we utter with our lips  
 Which, hearing, He may love us well ?

At the ambrosial hour of morn  
 Let us with reverence meditate  
 Upon His True and Holy Name  
 And also on His Majesty

This vectoro from past deeds result's  
 Salvation from His grace Divine  
 Thus Nanal, do we apprehend  
 That He is altogether true  
 \*
 \*
 \*

Should one defile his hands or feet  
 Or other portions of his frame  
 He can the stains by washing cleanse,  
 And from them all be freed again  
 Perchance polluted be one's clothes  
 They can with water be made clean  
 But if the heart is defiled by sin  
 It can be cleansed by only Him  
 Men cannot sinners be or saints  
 By merely claiming to be such  
 The Cherubim who are His scribe  
 Present to Him man's roll of debt  
 Who practiseth austerities  
 Almsgiving too and charity,  
 And who resorts to holy shrines  
 Of honour but a fraction gains  
 But he who fears Him and loves  
 And loves Him in his innocent heart  
 Shall wash off his impurities  
 Within his own heart a sacred shrine  
 In Thee O Lord, all virtue dwelt,  
 Not even one in me is found  
 By those devoid of virtue thou  
 Cannot be served or won lipp'd  
 Let him who seeketh Him regard  
 Contentment as his ear ring,  
 Let modesty his wallet be  
 His ash'z meditation deep  
 Let him consider death his quilt  
 And faith as his mainstay in life  
 And let him keep his body pure  
 (Like to a virgin undefiled )  
 In this wise he shall gain indeed  
 The spirit of true tolerance \*  
 For by subjection of the mind  
 Is Victory gained over all the world  
 All hail to him !—to Him all hail !  
 The Primal Being and the Pure  
 Th' Immortal Lord who never began,  
 Who is the same from age to age

---

\* Logie attainment

His mercy is His almoner,  
 Knowledge Divine, lo ! is His food  
 His Glory is proclaimed abroad  
 Through every corner of the world

\* \* \* \*

He sees all things that He has made,  
 But He Himself is never seen  
 By any being whatso'er, \*  
 He, truly, is most wonderful

\* \* \* \*

He having fashioned everything  
 Upon His own works contemplates  
 The works of Him the True One, are  
 One Nanak everlasting, sure  
 All hail to Him !—to Him all hail !  
 The Primal Being and the Pure,  
 Th' Immortal Lord who ne'er began,  
 Who is the same from age to age  
 Had I a hundred thousand tongues,  
 Yes, twentyfold as many more,  
 I then a hundred thousand times  
 Would tell His Name with all my tongues  
 I would in this way mount His stars,  
 And, reaching Him, be one with Him  
 The meanest, when they hear of Heav'n,  
 Are filled with longing to be there  
 O Nanak, He is realised  
 Only through His Own grace Divine  
 Who boast of other ways and means  
 They idle prattlers are and false  
 For silence, I no strength possess,  
 No strength to speak, to ask, to give,  
 To live, to die, to gain a crown,  
 To gather wealth and victories  
 No strength have I to think on Thee,  
 Or ponder over things Divine,  
 Nor have I strength to find the way  
 Of gaining freedom for my soul  
 O'Nanak ! He whose arm is strength,  
 He sees all things and wields all power ,  
 None in His sight is high or low  
 (For He regards all men alike) \*

[\* The above extracts are taken from a very beautiful translation of the *Japji* which appeared in the pages of *The East and West* from the pen of Dr O Caleb ]

We have extracted this poem at some length, as it embodies to a great extent the characteristic notions and spiritual concepts of Nanak and contains very fine and majestic poetry. The religion embodied in these stanzas is decidedly a sublime theism as known to Hinduism. God is the great Transcendent Being "the One True Name, the Creator the All Pervading One the undying Self-existent Lord." He creates and pervades all the worlds "Countless are His Attributes priceless His dealings and His marks, priceless His gifts and attributes." In all this sublime vision of God, the reader will also note the swift and exquisite touches of eager love and mysticism.

The need of love and devotion is described in the following poem —

O man entertain such love for God as the lotus  
hath for the water  
Such love doth the lotus bear that it bloometh, even  
when dashed down by the waves  
The creatures which God created in water die  
if denied it and therefore love it  
O man how shall thou be delivered without love?  
God pravadeth the heart of the pious and bestoweth on  
them as store of devotion  
O man entertain such love for God as the fish for the water  
The more it hath, the happier it becometh and the greater  
its peace of mind and body  
Without water it could not live for a moment, God alone  
knoweth the sufferings of its heart  
O man entertain such love for God as the cloud for rain  
Though the tanks be full and the earth drenched it will not  
drink from either  
It shall drink the raindrops otherwise it is fated to die<sup>14</sup>  
Such love of God is a beatitude in itself  
"Were rivers to become lime, and the springs to become  
milk and clarified butter,  
Were the whole earth to become sugar so that the heart  
might ever rejoice  
Were the mountains to become all gold and silver and be  
studded with diamonds and rubies

---

[<sup>14</sup>This and the following are taken from Nanak's poems translated by Macauliffe in his book on *Sikhism* Vol I.]

*I would even then magnify Thee and the desire to do so would not cease as I spoke "*

As religion consists in pure devotion and loving service, pilgrimages and ceremonials are a hindrance and of no use

' God maketh Himself manifest and beholdeth men '

He is not pleased by obstinate penance nor by any religious garbs

*He who fashioned the vessel of the body and poured into it His ambrosial gifts,*

*Will only be satisfied with man's love and service*

They who, though ever reading, forget God's name shall suffer punishment

And, notwithstanding their great cleverness, undergo transmigration

He who repeateth the Name and thus eateth the food of fear, Shall become a pious worshipper and be absorbed in God

He who worshippeth stones, visiteth places of pilgrimage, dwelleth in forests

And renounceth the world, wandereth and wavereth ,

How can his filth mind become pure ?

He who meeteth the True One shall obtain honour "

" There is no impurity in songs, there is no impurity in knowledge , there is no impurity in the moon's or the sun's different phases ,

There is no impurity in corn, there is no impurity in ablution , there is no impurity in rain which falleth everywhere, there is no impurity in earth there is no impurity in water ,

There is no impurity contained in air

There are no virtues O Nanak, in the man who is without a guru

It is he who turneth away from God whose mouth is impure "

The following poems preach true fear of God and trust in Him —

The fear of God is very great and very heavy

Man's wisdom is of little account, and so is his chatter

Walk with the load of fear on thy head ,

Meditate on the Guru who is kind and merciful

No one shall be saved without the fear of God His fear doth adorn man's love The fear of transmigration is burned away by the fear of God

By fear, the Word is fashioned and decorated

What is fashioned without fear is altogether worthless

Useless is the mould and useless the stroke thereon, "

" Thou art the Lord, to Thee be praise,

—All Life is with Thee

Thou art my parent I am Thy child,  
 All happiness is from Thy mercy  
 No one knows Thy ends  
 Highest Lord among the highest,  
 All that is from Thee obeys Thy will,  
 The movements, Thy pleasure,  
 Thou alone knowest  
 Nanak, Thy slave is a free will offering unto Thee ”  
 “ The priest, the Sheikhs, and the potentates of the world  
 are all beneath the Earth  
 Emperors pass away, but God ever flourisheth  
 There is only Thou,  
 There is only Thou, O God  
 Neither the just nor the generous  
 Nor the seven regions beneath the earth shall remain  
 There is One is there any other ?  
 There is only Thou, There is only Thou, O God  
 Not the regions of the sun and the moon  
 Nor the seven Continents, nor the seven seas,  
 Nor corn nor wind shall abide,  
 There is only Thou, There is only Thou, O God  
 Our maintenance is in nobody's power but God's  
 To all of us but one hope abideth,  
 There is One is there any other ?  
 There is only Thou, There is only Thou, O God  
 Birds have no money in their possession  
 They only depend on trees and water,  
 God is their Giver, There is only Thou !  
 There is only Thou, There is only Thou, O God ”

The following poems are full of true mystic insight and poetry In them is also to be found a great and intimate love of Nature and Her Beauty

“All hail to the great month in which spring ever beginneth  
 Ever and ever remember the Sustainer of the earth and thy heart shall rejoice

O, silly Man, forget thy pride Subdue thy pride and meditate on God in the heart , adopt the most excellent virtues

Good acts are the tree, God's name its branches, religion its flowers divine knowledge its fruit ,

Attainment of God its leaves, and the dispelling of mental pride its dense shade

They who behold God's power with their eyes, hear it with their ears, and repeat the True Name with their tongues

Obtain the full wealth of honour, and tranquilly meditate on God

*The great season hath come, be careful and do good works*

Nanak, the pious who continue 'absorbed in God, shall be perennial and never wither "

" The Sun and Moon, O Lord, are Thy lamps , the firmament Thy salver , the orbs of the stars, pearls encased in it

The perfume of sandal is Thy incense, the wind is Thy fan, all the forests are Thy flowers, O Lord of Light !

What worship is this, O Thou, Destroyer of Birth ? Unbeaten strains of ecstacy are the trumpets of Thy worship

Thou hast a thousand eyes and yet not one eye Thou hast a thousand forms and yet not one form '

"The light which is in everything, is Thine, O Lord of light !

Form Its brilliancy everything is brilliant

By the Guru's teachings the light becometh manifest

What pleaseth Thee is the real worship "

'When bronze, gold and iron break, the blacksmith weldeth them by means of fire

When husband falleth out with his spouse, a reconciliation is effected in this world through children.

When the king asketh and his subjects give, a bond is established between them

When the hungry man eateth, he establish an alliance with the world

Drought formeth an alliance with rivers when they are flooded with rain

There is an affinity between love and sweet words

If any one speak truth, he formeth a bond with knowledge

By goodness and truth, the dead establish a bond with the living

Such are the affinities that are established in the world

*By praising God, man establisheth, an alliance with God's Court*

Nanak sayeth this deliberately "

"God speaketh, preacheth, and listeneth ,

He who reflecteth on himself is a wise man

The body is earth, the wind speaketh thereon,

Consider, O wise man, what it is that dieth

It is the quarrelsome and proud understanding

The conscious soul dieth not

The Precious Jewel, for which men go on pilgrimage, dwelleth within the heart

Pandits read and argue but know not that which is within themselves

When my spiritual ignorance dieth,

I die not myself

He who is everywhere contained dieth not

Says Nanak when the guru showed me God,

No one seemed to me to die or to be born

All seasons are good for those who love the True One

The woman who knoweth her husband enjoyeth happiness day and night

The ferryman calleth out at the ferry 'come on, make haste, you delay'

I have seen at the other side those whom the Guru put into the boat

Some have loaded their baggage, some have set out with it and others are weighed down by their loads

They who have made true traffic are with the true God

I am not good nor do I find any one bad

Nanak, he who effaceth his pride is as the True One

In the teachings of Nanak, morality holds a very high place. Few of India's, even of the world's, religions have laid down a more exalted moral code than is to be found in the pages of the *Granthi*. Purity of life is set forth as the highest object of human endeavour. Nothing to which man can attain is more acceptable to God. Without it, even faith is unavailing. Loyalty, honesty, justice, mercy, charity and temperance are among the virtues on which vital stress is laid. While evil speaking, covetousness, anger, selfishness, extravagance and cruelty are denounced with equal rigour. The daily practice of cleanliness, of almsgiving and of abstinence from animal food, is strictly enjoined and obedience to the Guru is demanded of every Sikh as his first duty. But as regards the last, it is but proper to acquit Nanak of the height and extravagance to which the doctrine was pushed in latter days.

#### NANAK AND AFTER

Nanak was simply a teacher of religion. Regarding his followers merely as disciples, he did not contemplate a political future for them. As a preacher of peace and good-will to man, he told them "to fight with valour but with no weapon except the word of God". His care was to prevent his followers from contracting into a narrow sect or into monastic distinctions, proving this by excluding his son, a meditative ascetic, from the ministry after him, though his son in the end became

the founder of a sect called the *Udasis*, men indifferent to the world, who still exist in large numbers among the Sikhs. The religion thus established by Nanak differed in no wise from the one founded by Kabir and, but for great historical circumstances, would have developed into a quiet and Quaker-like faith. The persecution of the growing faith, however, by the Mahomedans gave it a sharp military character, and when a century of cruelty and distress passed, there came to the Guruship an intrepid and mystic youth who, fired with the indignities inflicted on his people and filled with a noble patriotism and love of men, welded the Sikhs into a strong and powerful nation and made possible the establishment of a small yet historic republic, which along with the rise and consolidation of the Marathas, forms one of the most interesting and remarkable episodes in the history of modern India.

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## RAVI DAS

THE Ravi Dasis form one of the most important Vaishnava sects of Hindusthan who take their name from their teacher Ravi (or Ravi) Das who was a tanner. This sect has a large number of adherents among the Chamars or Curriers of Upper India, and it forms a most interesting and instructive example of the reformed Vaishnavism extending even to the despised menial classes.

The Revivalist Movement in Medieval India was pioneered by the illustrious Ramananda and furthered by other equally great teachers. Nanak sowed the seeds of a new religion which helped to unite the peasants of the Punjab into a new and vigorous nation. Chaitanya in the east taught of a merciful God and of the path of devotion and roused Bengal from its slumber. In Central India itself, the reforms of Kabir and Ramanand inaugurated an era of saints and poets who by their lives and by their songs attested the nobility and value of the new movement. The movement, however, accomplished its supreme achievement when in the beginning of the fifteenth century, it gave birth to a Chamar saint whose memory is still cherished by the masses of Hindusthan.

One of the most noted of Ramananda's followers was Ravi Das, the Chamar. But attempts have been made to give him a respectable ancestry and in one account he is regarded as a Brahmin reborn from the womb of a Chamar woman. The story goes that when Ravi Das was born he refused to seek from the breast of his mother, because she had not been initiated into the Ramanandi Sect and was still a Chamari. Thereupon Ramananda commanded by God to initiate the whole family and then the infant prodigy consented to be fed. Ravi Das even as a youth was a devout worshipper.

of Rama His father, displeased with his abstraction turned him out, and Ravi Das then set up business as a shoe maker and made it a practice to supply shoes to all mendicant ascetics whom he came across When he was reproached for making an idol of God out of hide, he retorted by dwelling on the various uses to which hides are put He was always immersed in his devotions and had soon to abandon his trade When God came to his rescue in the garb of a mendicant and offered him the philosopher's stone, Ravi Das told him he might keep it in the thatch of his hut, meaning thereby that the article was not worth his acceptance After the lapse of some months the mendicant returned, and finding Ravi Das in the same poor condition as before he asked him what became of the philosopher's stone to which came the reply—"It must be where thou didst put it I have been afraid to touch it" Upon this successful second test, God was satisfied that Ravi Das desired no earthly wealth

This incident has since been versified by Sur Das thus —

"A great treasure is the name of Hari to me  
It multiplieth day by day, nor doth spending  
diminish it

"It abideth securely in the mansion and no  
thief can steal it

"The Lord is the wealth of Sur Das, what  
need hath he of the philosopher's stone?"

One day he miraculously found five gold coins deposited in the basket containing the usual articles of worship Ravi Das now trembled for the safety of his soul, that even devotion to God should have brought him wealth Then God appeared to him in a dream and ordered him to accept the wealth that was given to him by Divine command Ravi Das accepted it, but used it up in building a rest house for travellers and a temple for his god

Many stories are told of his great faith and purity. When the Brahmins refused to eat with him, they saw to their consternation Ravi Das sitting and eating between each two of them. They then became convinced of his sanctity and being repentant fell at his feet asking for forgiveness. Ravi Das then cut his skin and showed them under it his Brahminical thread, and thus he proved to the satisfaction of all that he had been a Brahmin in his previous birth. We are also told how Ravi Das could cure men even of foul diseases like leprosy and how even high caste Brahmins came to him for relief. Some legends about him have distinctly Chamar characteristics.

The Ravi Dasis believe that he died at the ripe age of 120 years and was taken to *Brahmapada* (the state of bliss). He disappeared in the flesh and took his sayings also with him. But many of his songs and sayings survive. Ravi Das was a strict monotheist following the general lines of Ramananda's teachings. He has been admitted to an honoured place in the *Bhakta Mala* (Lives of Vaishnava Saints). He held that the soul differs from God in that it is encumbered with a body, God is everything, is gracious to all and is accessible to all. He alone can save men from all evil passions and should be worshipped with all the devotion that man is capable of. Ravi Das was said to have been such a perfect saint that "his conversation and poetry were like suns to dispel the darkness of doubt and infidelity". Like the swan that separates milk from water and drinks only the milk, "Ravi Das selected virtue from vice, made choice of good acts and avoided things forbidden".

Many compositions of Ravi Das are found in the Sikh *Granth Sahib*. One, is particularly instructive, being his reflections on his relation with God.

I have joined true love with Thee,  
Joining Thee I have broken with all others,  
Whenever I go there is Thy service,  
There is no other Lord like Thee, O God,  
By worshipping Thee, Death's noose is cut away  
Ravi Das singeth to obtain Thy service "

There are other victories of faith recorded of him, how he became accepted as the spiritual guide of Queen Jhali of Chitor a high born Rajput lady, and how he often humbled the pride of the sacerdotal class and brought them to a keen sense of the equality of all God's creatures

Ravi Das's permanent work survives even to this day. Taking its name from him, there is an important Vaishnava sect, the *Ravi Dasis* (or *Raidasis*) which, as already told, has a large number of adherents among the currier and tanner castes of Upper India who follow, at least in theory, the "theistic form of belief venerating the one Omnipotent all seeing God to whom alone worship is due." They form a community ranking in numbers next to the *Ramanandis* and the *Kabirpanthis* (Crooke—*The North Western Provinces of India*—p. 256).

Legends about Ravi Das can easily be multiplied, and they are most of them fine and appealing. But as H. H. Wilson says "Whatever we may think of their (legends') veracity, their subject matter and tenor, representing an individual of the most object class—an absolute out caste in Hindu estimation—as a teacher and saint, is not without interest and instruction."

## MIRA BAI, THE SAINT OF RAJPUTANA

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KABIR'S temple in Benares contains a picture of the saint and Ravi Das, a friend and fellow disciple of his, a *Chamar* who made his favourite idol of leather. Against the *Chamar* saint the Brahmins attempted a crusade, but Ravi Das's hymns and conversation were such as to disarm all opposition. Jhali, the Queen of Chitor, became a disciple of Ravi Das, at which the Brahmins grew highly indignant, but to no purpose. Ravi Das always maintained that "what is dear to God is devotion, and He payeth no need to caste." The Queen's husband was easily convinced of Ravi Das's greatness, and the saint was admitted ultimately to the highest dignities—even by Brahmins.

### MIRA BAI—HER PLACE IN HISTORY

The Queen of Chitor, mentioned above must be Mira Bai, the most famous of Hindi poetesses and a princess of Rajputana. The sympathetic Colonel Tod says that she was the most celebrated princess of her time for beauty and romantic poetry, and that "her compositions were numerous, though better known to the worshippers of the Hindu Apollo, than to the ribald bards."<sup>\*</sup> Her history is a romance and there is a great deal of confusion as to the date and the details of her life. According to one version she was married to Bhojaraj, the heir apparent of Khumba, the Maharana of Mewar and the head of the Rajput chivalry, and we are told that her husband died before he came to the throne while Khumba was put to death by another son Udekaran in 1469. Tod himself regarded her as

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\* *Annals of Mewar*, Chapter VIII

having been married to Rama Khamba, while Macauliffe says that she was born about 1504 A.D., the daughter of Ratan Singh Rahtor of Merata, and that she was betrothed to Kunwar Bhojaraj, the son of the famous Rana Singh Rahtor of Merata, and that she was betrothed to Kunwar Bhojaraj, the son of the famous Rana Sanga while the marriage itself took place in 1516 A.D. Popular tradition has made her a contemporary of Tulasi Das, the famous Hindi poet and of the great Akbar as well. Tulasi Das, according to all accepted accounts lived nearly a century after Mira Bai. A letter said to have been addressed to Tulasi Das in which Mira Bai complained of the continual annoyance given to her by her husband's relations and requested advice of the saint, is even now preserved, as well as the latter's reply to it. Tulasi Das is said to have given the following advice as to the course of conduct of Mira Bai —

Prahlad abandoned his father, Vibishan his brother Ravan, and Bharat his mother

Bali his guru, the women of Braj their husbands, and their lives were all happier for having done so

The opinion of all holy saints is that relations with and love of God are alone true

Saint Tulasi Das, that spouse is worshipful, that son is dearer than life

Who is attached to Ram, He is my real friend in this world

We do not know why the saint Ravi Das who was a worshipper of Rama and Tulasi Das, the greatest of the Ramanandis, were closely associated with Mira Bai who was a confirmed devotee of the Krishna cult even from her childhood. But both the Ramatic cult and the worship of Krishna were the twin offshoots of the Vaishnavite Bhakthi movement which had its origin several centuries before this time, and the differences between the two were not great.

Mira Bai popularised the Krishna cult in Western Hindustan "In the literature connected with this form of *Bhakti* movement the writers often use the most erotic language and sensuous imagery to describe the soul's devotion under the picture of Radha's self-abandonment to her beloved Many of the verses could not be translated into English Yet the writers of these lyrics of passionate devotion were often persons of real religious earnestness, quite free from any impure motives in composing them" Mira Bai showed an intensive attachment to her favourite deity Krishna, and her excess of devotion gave rise to many tales of scandal in her life time Her lyrics are mostly devout effusions about Krishna, but in a few of them she uses the name of Rama also for God She wrote in the Braj Basha dialect of Muttra and Brindaban and the neighbourhood—which has come to be looked upon as the poetic dialect of Hindi *par excellence* and in which the *Ashta Cchap* poets, disciples of Vallabhacharya, including Sur Das, the greatest of them all, wrote Besides the Hindi lyrics and melodious verses of Mira Bai, there are many similar lyrics in Gujarati which are also ascribed to the poetess One of her hymns is preserved in the Sikh *Granth Sahib* of Bhai, Banno This was first inserted by Guru Arjun Singh in his collection of the Sikh sacred writings, but the Guru subsequently drew his pen across the hymn saying that though it was good, still its author lived and died an idolater It is as follows

God hath entwined my soul, O Mother, with his attributes and I have sung of them.

The sharp arrow of His love hath pierced my body through and through, O Mother,

When it struck me I did not know it Now it cannot be endured, O Mother

Thou, O God, art near, Thou art not distant, come quickly to meet me

Saint Mira, the Lord, the mountain wielder, who is compassionate, hath quenched the fire of my body,  
O mother,

The Lotus eyed hath entwined my soul with the twine  
of His attributes \*

### HER LIFE

Mira Bai, even when a young child only four years of age, displayed her religious proclivities which she probably inherited from her saintly mother. One day when a marriage procession was passing along the front of her father's palace, while all the ladies of the court were looking on at the show, the mother went up to worship an image of her favourite deity Girdhar Lal (Krishna) and the child accompanied her. When the child asked her as to who was to be her bridegroom, the mother pointed out the image, whereupon Mira Bai instantly accepted him, and "veiled her face according to Oriental practice, which requires a wife to veil her face even from her newly married husband." Her love for Krishna became unbounded, and the child openly prattled of her passion without any fear or shame. When she was married in due course to the Kunwar Raja Sahib of Mewar, her husband came to her father's palace in great state, but the girl instead of walking thrice round her husband according to custom, walked round the image of Krishna and took no notice of the prince whatever. She insisted, when she was to go away with her husband, upon taking her precious idol without which, she declared, her life would not be happy at all. Her parents assented and gave her the image as part of her dowry.

When the Maharani of Mewar, her mother in law, desired her as a newly-wedded bride to worship Durga, Mira Bai stoutly refused to do so, saying

\**The Indian Antiquary*, 1903, p. 335

that her whole body and soul had been devoted to Krishna. It was represented to the saint, that even Rukmini, Krishna's consort and the *Gopis* did not get at Krishna until they had sacrificed to Durga as good housewives. To this she declared that it was unnecessary for her to worship Durga, as she had already obtained Krishna and that "no exception could be taken to her conduct on the precedent of Rukmini and the milkmaids."

Mira Bai was then confined in a room by herself. There she set up her favourite image and gave free vent to all her pent up enthusiasm. She solicited and sought the company of *fakirs* and holy men and declared to her sister in law who came to remonstrate, that the slur was on her who loved not the company of saints. Then she sang —

"My mother in law is severe, my sister in law obstinate,  
how can I endure this misery ?

"Mira for the sake of the Lord Girdhar, would endure  
the obloquy of the world

I have planted the vine of love and irrigated it again and  
again with the water of tears

I have cast away fear of the world, what can any one  
do to me ?

Mira's love for her God is fixed, come what may \*

Her persecution by her father in law now began in real earnest. He first sent her a cup of poison called *chainamit* through the hand of her own mother. When Mira took the cup, she said 'The body is perishable, so mother, why weep if it perish in the service of Krishna? There need be no regret at the disappearance of a mirage or at the failure of the son of a barren woman to wed. It is not right to say that the moon perishes on the thirtieth day of the lunar month. Your lamentations are as vain as the grief of the bee at the fading of an imaginary flower. As the fruit of a tree falls sooner or later, so I have

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\*Macauliffe—*The Sikh Religion* Vol VI pp 345 346

fallen at Krishna's feet The world itself is an illusion, wherefore mourn not for me" Mira's only grief at dying was the fear that the worship of Krishna might decline with her and called upon her God to assure her that there would be no such contingency Mira drank the fatal cup with serenity but the Lord preserved her , and "her cheeks gradually assumed a higher bloom" She devoted herself more than before to her image , and she declared to the Rana—" O King, keep thine own family in seclusion , I am the wife of another, not thy son" The Rana then appointed tipstafs to watch Mira Bai whose close association with fakirs and saints was unseemly , and report One day when she was talking to the image in her room, the matter was reported to the Rana that she was holding amorous converse with a *fakir* and the Rana went straight into her room , and there he beheld not any human being, but only the idol who had been playing chess with Mira Bai and at the time of the Rana's entrance actually extended one of its arms to move a piece on the chess board On witnessing this miracle the Rana became ashamed of himself But he would not still be convinced of the purity of the saint The idol of Mira is still preserved in a temple dedicated to her memory in the old Chitor, abandoned since Akbar destroyed the fortress

Once when Mira Bai was ill, she said—" you may write and bring me incantations, you may write and bring me spells, grind medicine and give it to me , that will not cure me If any one bring me Krishna as my physician, I will gladly arise "

Again when a dissolute person attempted to seduce her, she overcame him, turned his mind from its evil channel and changed his vice into

virtue. Everything she declared was known to God who sees the good and bad acts of all and rewards men according to their deserts. The repentant sinner fell at Mira Bai's feet and asked for her mercy and divine intercession.

An interesting story is told of how the great Emperor Akbar, having heard of the virtues and beauty of Mira Bai, went along with his minstrel friend, Mian Tansen of Gwalior, both disguised as hermits, to see her. When Akbar saw her intense piety and devotion, his heart melted and he felt pleased that fortune should have been so kind to him as to enable him to behold her; and he presented her with a greatly bejewelled necklace which she accepted with some misgivings, as it appeared too valuable an article for an ascetic to possess. The disguised Emperor said that he came across the jewel while performing his usual ablutions in the river Jumna and he thought that it would be found acceptable to her favourite God Girdhar Lal. Mian Tansen composed an ode in honour of Mira Bai; and then both he and his Imperial master returned to their home.

Further interest attaches to the subsequent portion of the legend. The possession of such a valuable necklace provoked remarks unfavourable to the purity of Mira Bai. The Maharana had the jewel valued and came to know that not long before a famous diamond merchant had sold it to the Emperor; and he, on further enquiry, came to be convinced that the strolling hermits who came to see Mira Bai were none other than Akbar and Tansen. The Rana resolved that Mira Bai should die and sent her a deadly cobra concealed in a box so that when she opened it she might be stung by the reptile. The story tells us how when she opened the box to take out the salagram as it was represented to her she prayed to her Lord

Girdhar to extricate her from her peril, and the cobra became a *salagram* in reality. Mira Bai then danced with joy, sang the praises of Krishna and declared that she was absorbed in the Lord as "butter before churning is in milk."

Mira's father in law was still bent upon her death. She was now a widow and she was at liberty to court death in any form that she liked. According to Mr. Keny, she was so much persecuted by her brother in law that she fled from Chitor and became a follower of Ravi Das, the *Chamai* disciple of Ramananda.<sup>\*</sup> She once resolved to die by drowning herself in the river but she was miraculously preserved by an angel who brought her to the bank and who told her that she was saved since she had a higher duty to perform and should be an example unto men how to fulfil the designs of the Creator and become absorbed in Him. Some cow herds who found her on the river bank directed her to holy Brindaban where she spent some time. She there desired to see Jiv Gosain, the son of the famous Vaishnava saint, Vallabhacharya, and uncle to Rup and Sannan, two of the most devout followers of Chaitanya. Jiv Gosain was the head of the Vaishnava movement in Brindaban, but to Mira's great disappointment he refused to see her, saying that he would allow no woman into his presence. Mira Bai retorted, "I thought every body in Brindaban was a woman and only Girdhar Lal a man. I learn to day there are other partners than Krishna in Brindaban." By this she wanted to rebuke the Gosain for placing himself on an equality with Krishna as the God of Brindaban. The Gosain saw the justice of the rebuke, went bare headed to her presence to do her homage and beholding her became filled with the love of God."

After some time which she spent in great usefulness at Brindaban she returned to her husband's place, but finding her people still obdurate, she made a pilgrimage to Dwaraka in distant Kathiawar where Krishna retreated after his flight from Muttra and reigned for a long time. During her absence at Dwaraka, the Maharana found that *sadhus* and holy men ceased to visit his city where squabbles and dissensions increased, and he now realised what a precious person he had lost in Mira Bai. He now sent numbers of Brahmins to entreat Mira Bai to return to Rajasthan and "to tell her it was impossible for him to live unless she complied with his prayer". The Brahmins requested, but Mira refused, then they sat *dhan* at her door and refused to budge or take any food until she complied. She replied that she would ask permission of her Lord Krishna and went to the temple of Ranchhod\* (the name that Krishna received when he fled from Jarasandha to Dwaraka) and became absorbed in his love, she was incorporated into the idol, her body was lost to the human gaze. The only trace of her was her *sari* which was found enveloping the body of the idol. The Brahmins' faith in Krishna was confirmed. They returned to Chitor, and "the Maharana soon experienced the further mortification of beholding his State conquered and plundered, it is said, by the victorious army of Akbar as a retribution for the ill-treatment of Mira Bai". Mira had prayed to Ranchhod thus —

All places of pilgrimage even abide in the Gomti for me.  
I have abandoned my country, my queenly robes, my  
husband's palace, my property and my kingdom.

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\* *Ranchhod* is a form of Krishna specially worshipped at Dwaraka and throughout Gujarat. The name means "fight quitter" and has been interpreted to mean "deliverer from evil"—Monier Williams—*Brahminism and Hinduism*, p 152

Mira, Thy slave, cometh to Thee for refuge, her honour is now totally in Thy keeping.\*

In memory of Mira Bai's absorption in the Lord Ranchhod, her image is still worshipped at Udaipur, the present capital of the Ranas of Mewar, "in conjunction with that of Ranchhod, the beloved Girdhar of her childhood "

## VALLABHACHARYA

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A MONG the several sects that arose in Mediæval India, none has spread more widely or attracted more popular attention both in India and outside than the one connected with the name and teachings of Vallabhacharya. A native of the Telugu country, a great Sanskrit scholar, Vallabhacharya was a South Indian missionary who settled first at Muttra and then at Benares and preached with great ardour and learning the Vaishnavite cult and philosophy. He made a tour through the whole of India in the manner of other mediæval reformers and won fame and following in several disputations in various cities. The discovery of an image of Krishna in the Govardhana Hill and its due installation in a temple therein brought him additional fame, but it did not interfere with his life of study and preaching and, writing commentaries which he carried on, surrounded by the few disciples that had gathered round him. He closed his days at Benares at the age of fifty-two. The energy and enthusiasm of his descendants—two sons and seven grandsons, one of the latter, Gokulpath by name, being more eminent than the rest—however gave the new cult and religion wide currency and popularity throughout the regions of Rajasthan and Gujarat. Following perhaps in the wake of Akbar's conquests in the 16th century which had conciliated the proud nobles and soldiers of Rajasthan, Gokulnath converted them all to his faith, and they soon hastened to build shrines and *maths* to Krishna and their Guru and endow them with lands and revenues.

### THE EARLIER VAISHNAISM OF RAJASTHAN AND GUJARAT

Two great names are associated with the earlier phases of Vallabha's life, Narsing Mehta, the Brahmin bard of Gujarat (1415-1481 A.D.) and Mira Bai (1504-1550), the Rajput Queen and mystic. We may include with these the famous Sur Das, the blind bard of Agra (flourished 15th century), though Sir G. A. Grierson seems to place him among Vallabha's followers, (Imp. Gaz. of India Vol. II)

### VALLABHACHARYA (1479-1531 A.D.) PARENTAGE AND FAMILY

Vallabhacharya, the founder of the great Vaishnavite Church of Rajasthan and Gujarat, was the second son of Lakshmana-Bhatt, a Telengana Brahmin. Lakshmana-Bhatt was descended from a Brahman named Narayana-Bhatt (fourth in direct descent from the latter), was a student of the Black Yajur-Veda, and dwelt in a village called Kankarava in the Telugu country. Lakshmana-Bhatt lived somewhere in the middle of the fifteenth century, the particulars of the exact period are not preserved. He seems to have believed that he had been promised by Krishna that he would have three sons, and that his second son would be an incarnation of God himself. His wife's name was Elamangara, and the first son of the marriage was Ramakrishna.

### VALLABHA'S BIRTH

After the birth of this child, Lakshmana-Bhatt taking his family with him went on a pilgrimage by the route of Allahabad to Benares. He dwelt there for some time, but, a violent dispute having arisen in the city between the Mussalmans and the Hindu Sanyasis, which resulted in a bloody conflict, Lakshmanan-Bhatt, apprehensive of the safety of his family, fled away with them. In

the course of their flight through the country they eventually arrived at a wild spot called Champaranya. The terror of the fight combined with the wild savageness of the country through which they were fleeing, had the effect upon Elamagara of accelerating labour, she being at the time pregnant with her second child and in the midst of the lonely forest she gave birth to an eightmonths' child, on Sunday, the eleventh day of the dark half of Vaisakha of the Vikrama year 1535—(1479 A D )

In a work called *Niyarta*, dealing with holy lives belonging to the Vallabbacharya sect, it is stated that, when Vallabha was born in Champaranya, a palace of gold sprang up on the spot, and the gods from the heavens showered down flowers, the *Kinnaras* and the *Gandharvas* sang and gods themselves descended in their *vimans* to see the blessed child. Embarrassed perhaps by the circumstances of their flight or trusting to providential intervention to protect the child, the parents, it is said, forthwith abandoned it, placing it gently upon leaves in the shade of a wide-branching tree. Still pursuing their flight, they arrived at a place called Chowdanagar, where, after residing some time, they received intelligence that quiet was completely restored at Benares, upon which they set out to return to that place, and taking intentionally the route by which they had come they speedily reached the spot where they had deserted their infant.

Here, to their astonishment, they beheld the little child alive and well, playing. It is said, in the midst of a sacrificial fire in a pit sunk on the spot. After some short repose and refreshment, the parents resumed their journey taking the child with them to Benares which they eventually reached. The name they gave the child

was *Vadtibha* which was afterwards changed into Vallabha. In the place of his birth, Champaranya, Vallabha's followers, prompted by zeal and love, have erected a temple on the spot of his nativity, which is still in existence. The younger brother of Vallabha who was born some time after was named Kesava.

#### VALLABHA'S EDUCATION

When Vallabha had reached the age of six or seven years, he was placed for instruction under the tuition of Narayana Bhatta. It is not known whether Vallabha was sent to the native village in the Telugu country for instruction or had the same in the city of Benares itself. The Vallabha-chari chronicle written in the Braj Bhasa tells us that Vallabha's rapidity of apprehension was so great and miraculous that in the short space of four months he succeeded in learning the whole of the four Vedas, the six Shastras and the eighteen Puranas. Whatever be the truth of this story, there is no doubt that Vallabha had acquired vast Sanskrit learning and that he had completely studied the various philosophical systems and sciences current in his day. Vallabha, on attaining his eleventh year, lost his father. The following year he took leave of his mother, and, bidding farewell to Gokul, the village of his residence on the left bank of the Jumna, a short distance from Muttra, he started on his pilgrimage to South India where his ancestors had originally lived.

#### VALLABHA'S PILGRIMAGES

Vallabha had perhaps by this time, though he was young, pondered over and matured his scheme of Vaishnavite faith and philosophy, for we find him in his travels in the South preaching his religion and converting men or engaging in scholastic disputation with the learned. One of

his early converts seems to have been the son of a rich and important man of South India, whose name was Damodar Das After his conversion, Damodar followed Vallabha in his travels and they both arrived at the city of Vijavansgar where the maternal grand parents of Vallabha resided Krishna Deva Raya was the king at the time, to whose court he was introduced It is recorded that Vallabha was invited to a philosophic disputation with the Saivites, followers of the Advaitic School, and the king, in whose court the disputation took place, was so pleased with Vallabha for the genius and learning displayed, that he bestowed upon him rich presents of gold and silver A portion of these Vallabhi devoted to the manufacture of a handsome golden waist ornament with which to decorate the image of the deity in a temple of the city, and another portion he appropriated to the discharge of debts incurred by his father and left unpaid at his death The fourth only of the presents did he reserve to himself to meet the possibility of his needs

#### ELECTION AS A VAISENAVA ACHARYA

The success in the disputation with the Smarta Brahmins was attended with a more remarkable result We are told that the Vaishnavas of the locality, struck with Vallabha's attacks on the Saivite School and finding in him a strong advocate of the Vaishnava religion and philosophy, proceeded to elect him as their spiritual chief with the title of Acharya From this date, Vallabhacharya's fame and influence rapidly increased His further travels are thus described by Wilson "He travelled to Ujjain and took up his abode under a pipal tree, on the banks of the Sipra, which is said still to exist and designated as his baithak or station Besides this, we find traces of him in other places There is a baithak of his amongst the ghats of Muttra , and about two

miles from the fort of Chunar is a place called 'his well, Acharyi kund, comprising a temple and *math* in the courtyard of which is the well in question. The saint is said to have resided here sometime" Vallabhacharya, then, returned to the North by way of Maharashtra and Rajasthan, perhaps preaching his religion in the cities where he stayed and making converts, even like the other great reformer and preacher of this epoch, Chaitanya, who lived in exactly the same period (1485—1533) Alike in their vast learning and religious attainments, alike in the zeal with which they preached and spread the new Vaishnavite religion, these two bear a striking and historic parallel. Returning to Benares by way of Allahabad, Vallabhacharya remained there for some time, carrying on further studies in the new religion and philosophy. He started again on a second pilgrimage but this time to the ancient places of pilgrimage in the Himalayan valleys, Hardwar and Badri Kedar. He returned after a period of nine years and settled in the groves of Brindavan, now more important to him with his Vaishnavite loves and gospel, than a mere place of sojourn which it was to his itinerant parents.

#### DISCOVERY AND INSTALLATION OF SHRI NATHJI

While living here amidst the classic groves engaged in Vaishnavite devotion and studies, surrounded also perhaps by the few disciples he had by this time gathered, it is said that God Krishna appeared to him one day in his sleep, told him that he had become manifest in the Govardhana Hill under the name of Devadamana or Shri Nathji, and that his attendants at the cow settlement when he became incarnate as Krishna had been born again, and added that Vallabha should come to see Him. Accordingly

Vallabha and his disciples went, found an image of Devadamana or Shri Nathji and, duly constructing a temple, installed the image therein Shri Nathji, it is said, further commanded Vallabha to propagate His worship, without which a man would not be admissible to the Pushtimarga or the path of Divine Grace "The meaning of this legend seems to be," as Sir R G Bhandarkar suggested, "that Vallabha connected his system with a special manifestation of Krishna known by the name of Shri Nathji."

This incident seems to have made a profound impression upon the followers of Vallabhacharya, for, in later times when his teachings had spread over Rajasthan, we find that it is one of the great themes with which the art and poetry of the country are pre occupied In the collection of Rajput paintings, published by Dr Ananda Coomaraswamy, a most beautiful painting portrays this historic event In a back ground all covered with hills, representing Brindavana, Vallabhacharya is seen installing the image in the Govardhana Hill Below, on the left are two disciples, perhaps Telengana Brahmins, in attitudes of devotion, and a servant with a bale of offerings for the new shrine On the right are two Princes of Udaipur, of whom the foremost is no doubt Raj Singh, and two Gopis or perhaps Princesses, with offerings of milk and curds The foreground is occupied on the right and left by villages (with a temple on the right) and two bathing tanks in the centre one of the latter is surrounded by little *chatris* or stone pavilions "The most beautiful figure is that of the foremost Brahman, a true *bhakta*, whose eyes are closed and hands outstretched in fervent adoration" The date of this event, the installation of Shri Nathji, is usually given as Samvat 1576 or A D 1520

### VALLABHA'S MARRIAGE AND FAMILY LIFE

Shortly before or after this event, Vallabhacharya married at Benares a Brahmin girl by name Maha Lakshmi Vallabhachalaya, like the other reforming Vaishnavas of the day, seems to have taught that marriage and family were no hindrance to religious life and set an example in himself. Two sons were born of this marriage, the first named Gopinatha being born in 1511 A D (Samvat 1567) and the second Vittalnathji born in 1516 A D (Samvat 1572) in the village of Parvat. Vallabhacharya himself educated both his sons thus fitting them for their work as his successors in preaching the Vaishnavite cult.

### AT BENARES

Vallabhacharya seems to have divided his time between Benares and Brindavan partly residing at one place and partly at another. At first his Vaishnavite gospel could have found little following in the city of Benares, the seat of Saivism as it was and of Advaitic learning. But Vallabhacharya seems to have little feared the learned men of the city, for a remarkable anecdote is told of how, in one of his earlier visits to that city, he posted on the walls of a temple a challenge to a disputation. The invitation, it is said, was responded to especially by the followers of Sankaracharya, and Vallabha's chronicles add that they were all defeated. It is evident that he derived considerable repute from this occurrence, and it is most likely that a man of such renown, so prominent and esteemed for his great sanctity and knowledge, should often be led to enter into philosophic and theological disputations with learned men of the same or rival faiths in Benares and other seats of learning. We read in the life of Chaitanya, written almost contemporarily, that on coming to

Benares at about the same time when Vallabha was engaged in his disputations, the Bengali preacher entered into a great disputation with one Parekshanand, a famous Advaitic scholar, and converted him to his Vaishnavite cult.

#### HIS LAST YEARS

Vallabhacharya spent the last years of his life at Benares, surrounded by his family and disciples and composing the numerous works which now bear his name and are the chief authority of his sect. In writing these works, mostly commentaries and short philosophical or devotional treatises, Vallabhacharya seems to have been aided by some scholars, perhaps his disciples. These works embody Vallabhacharya's special version of the Vaishnavite Philosophy and his notions of worship and spiritual training. His cult and doctrines resemble a great deal those of the contemporary Chaitanya. The chief works of Vallabha are the following a few of them are too small and a few including Vyasa and Jaimini Sutra-Bhashyas are not perhaps extant.

- 1 *Vyasa Sutra Bhashya*
- 2 *Jaimini Sutra Bhashya*
- 3 *Bhagavatha Tika Subhodhini*
- 4 *Pushti Prajna Maryada*
- 5 *Sidhanta Rahasya*

(All these are in Sanskrit)

- 6 *Antahkarna Prabodha*
- 7 *Nava Ratna*
- 8 *Krishna Ashraya,*
- 9 *Bhakti Vardini, and a few others*
- 10 *Vishnu Padas*

(All these are in the Braj Bhasa)

Among these the most important works are the *Subhodhini*, a commentary embodying great learning on the first four *adhyayas* of the 10th

Skandha of the Bhagavatha Purana, and *Siddhanta Rahasya* embodying the principles and doctrines of the Sect.

From the time when Vallabhacharya began to preach his creed, he had made eighty four devoted disciples. The lives of Vallabha and these Chorasī Vaishnavas are given in a large work entitled *Vartha* or *Bartha* in Western Hindi. Wilson characterises the chronicle as "being full of marvellous and inspired anecdotes", there can be no doubt that they are much inferior to the full and accurate lives of Chaitanya and his disciples which were written by some of his gifted followers like Damodar and Krishna Das. It may be mentioned that the Hindi *Bhakta Mala* written by Nabhaji Das also contains some account of Vallabha and his followers.

#### HIS DEATH

At the age of fifty two, Vallabha closed his days in the city of Benares. Most legendary accounts, as usual, are given of this event. It is said that, having accomplished his mission, he entered the Ganges at Hanuman Ghat and, when stepping into the water, passed out of sight. A brilliant flame arose from the spot and in the presence of a host of spectators he ascended to Heaven and was lost in the firmament. The last place where he made his dwelling is said to be Jethan Bir at Benares near which a *math* still subsists.

#### VALLABHACHARYA'S SUCCESSORS AND THEIR WORK

On the death of Vallabhacharya, a dispute ensued between his two sons, Gopinatha and Vittalnath, with regard to the succession to his *gadi* or position as a Teacher, and it appears the dispute was decided by the intervention of the King of Delhi in favour of the eldest son, Gopinatha. Gopinatha however dying immediately together with his son, Vittalnath became the sole representative of Vallabhacharya.

Vittalnath (1516—1576) is represented as an able successor of his father, having made, it is said, two hundred and fifty two devoted converts to the new creed, whose history is narrated in a big work like the *Vartha*. He made long journeys, visiting Muttra and Gokul in the province of Agra, he next went to Dwarika, from Dvirka he proceeded to Cutch and the countries of Malwa and Mewar, making proselytes everywhere. He thence turned southward to Pandharpur in the province of Bijapur. During his journeys in Central Rajasthan and elsewhere, he made numerous converts among the Baniyas or bankers, the Bhattias and the Kunbis or the cultivators, the Sutaras or cultivators and the Lowars or blacksmiths, a few Brahmins also became his followers as well as some Mussalmans. Vittalnath seems to have preached equality among his followers.

Vittalnath went in Samvat 1621 (1565 A.D.) to Gokul, on the banks of the Jumna, with the determination of spending the rest of his days there. After residing at Gokul for some time, he gave up his intention and removed to Muttra on the opposite bank of the Jamna. But even at Muttra he did not stay long, for, it is said, he visited Gujarat six times during his life. Anyhow after having made a number of journeys into Rajasthan and Gujarat prompted by proselytizing zeal, Vittalnath seems to have finally settled at Gokul, and thereby acquired the name of Gokul Gosainji—a name which has been perpetuated in all his male descendants. Vittalnath wrote several works of repute, specially commentaries. In one of his works, the *Viduan Mandan*, he has severely criticised the sect and doctrines of Sankaracharya. He died at the ripe age of seventy years on the sacred Hill of Govardhan in Gokul where his father had set up the image of Shri Nathji.

## VITTALNATH'S SONS

Vittalnath was twice married, the name of his first wife being Rukmani and that of the second being Padmavati. By these wives he had seven sons and four daughters. The names of the sons in the order of their birth are Girdharji, Govinda Ray, Balakrishnaji, Gokulnathji, Raguhnathji, Jadunathji, Ghanashyamji.

All these seven sons, upon the death of Vittalnathji, became widely dispersed throughout Western India—Rajasthan and Gujarat—and each of them established his own *gadi* or seat of teaching. They gave the Vaishnavite cult wide diffusion and made increasing proselytes.

Gokulnathji (1552—1610), the fourth, became however the most celebrated of the seven. He wrote a number of commentaries on the works of his grandfather, the *Siddhanta Rahasya* and others. He is said to have been highly ambitious and to have given a sad and idolatrous turn to the doctrines of the sect. His descendants to day keep themselves separate from those of his brothers or *Gosains* of the Faith. It was about the period of this dispersion of the sons of Vittalnathji that it is presumed that they acquired the title of *Maharaj* which effectually conveys in its significance and meaning the full force of the wide sway and influence of Vallabha's descendants. There are other titles too, such as *Gosain* (Lord of Cows) or *Goswami*, *Vallabhakula*, *Acharya*, *Guru*, *Prabhu*, etc.

The followers of this sect have greatly increased since the times of Vittalnath and comprise the entire population of Cutch, Kathiawar, Rajasthan and Malwa. The wealthy merchants and bankers and the princes are devoted votaries. The *Maharajahs* or the descendants of Vallabha have increased proportionately and they now number

some sixty or seventy, widely dispersed throughout the countries abovementioned and in possession of rich *maths* and shrines. Of these, it is said, only two or three have any knowledge of Sanskrit and the rest are grossly ignorant and lead lives of luxurious peace. Of the descendants of Vallabha who flourished in the 17th and 18th centuries, during which time the religion was firmly established throughout Rajasthan and Gujarat and various *mandirs* and *maths* were erected, we have no available accounts. The story and character of two principal Gosains who flourished in the respective capitals of Mewar and Marwar in the beginning of the 19th century are however preserved to us in the pages of Tod's *Rajasthan* and throw interesting light on the type of men that at about this time were occupying the Vaishnavite *gadis* in the various parts of Western India. The first belongs to a scheming worldly type not uncommon in the religious history of the world.

When suicide was the sole alternative to avoid surrender to the fangs of this Herod of the Desert, the high priest (Deonath) assuming the mantle of prophet pronounced that no capitulation was inscribed in the book of fate who o pages revealed brighter days for young Maun. Such prophets are dangerous about the persons of prince who seldom fail to find the means to prevent their oracles from being demented.

Deonath was a striking example of the ideality of human nature under whatever garb and in whatever clime, whether under the cowl or the coronet, in the cold climate of Europe or the deserts of India. This Wolsey of Marwadis exercised his hourly increasing power to the disgust and alienation of all but his infatuated prince. He leagued with the nominal minister Induraj, and together they governed the prince and country. Such characters when exceeding the sphere of their duties, expose religion to contempt.

**The second is more amiable and respectable**

The present pontiff Damodara is the lineal descendant (of Vallabhacharya), and whether in addressing him verbally or by letter, is styled Maharajah or 'great Prince'. As the

supreme head of the Vishnu sect, his person is held to be *amsa* or a 'portion of the divinity' The pontiff is now about thirty years of age He is of a benign aspect, with much dignity of demeanour, courteous, yet exacting the homage due to his calling, meek as becomes the priest of Govinda but with the finished manners of one accustomed to the first society His features are finely moulded and his complexion good He is about the middle size, though as he rises to no mortal, I could not exactly judge of his height When I saw him he had only one daughter to whom he is much attached He has but one wife nor does Krishna allow polygamy to his priest In times of danger, like some of his prototypes in the dark ages of Europe, he poised the lance and found it more effective than spiritual anathemas against those who would first adore the God and then plunder him Such were the Mahratta chiefs, Jeswant Rao Holkar and Bapoo Scindia Damodara accordingly made the tour of his extensive diocese at the head of four hundred horses, two standards of foot and two field pieces He rode the finest mares in the country laid aside his pontificals for the quilted *dugla*, and was summoned to his matins by the kettledrum instead of the bell and cymbal In this he only imitated Krishna who often mixed in the ranks of battle and dyed his saffron robe in the red stained field But notwithstanding this display of martial principle which covered with a helmet the shaven crown, his conduct and character are amiable and unexceptionable, and he furnishes a striking contrast to the late head of the Vishnu establishments in Marwar, who commenced with the care of his master's conscience and ended with that of the state, meek and unassuming till he added temporal to spiritual power, which developed unlimited pride, with all the qualities that too often wait on 'a little brief authority' and to the display of which he fell a victim "

#### VALLABHA'S RELIGION AND TEACHING

Before we deal with the progress of the sect and its influence on the character and worship of the people, we shall study a little the religious creed which Vallabha and his successors propounded It was a religion addressed to the worship of Vishnu in the form of Krishna, and in its doctrinal aspects was derived chiefly, like the system of Chaitanya, from the Vaishnavite Philosophy propounded by Ramanuja Centred round the conception of a Personal and Beneficent God (who

is *sat*, *chit* and *ananda*), it laid great emphasis on *Pushti* (Grace) and *Bhakthi* (Devotion) and has left a body of literature in Sanskrit and vernacular to some extent greater than that of the Chaitanyaite sect itself. The following is an authoritative exposition of the talents of Vallabha, based upon the works of the sect, from the pen of Sir Bhandarkar —

"Vallabha's Vedantic theory is the same as that of an earlier author of the same of Vishnuswamin. This Vishnuswamin is said to have been the son of the counsellor of a Dravida Chief dependent on the Emperor of Delhi.

The Vedantic theory of Vishnuswamin is as follows. The one primeval soul was not joyful because he was alone (B U), and, desiring to be many, he himself became the inanimate world, the individual soul, and the inward controlling soul. These sprang from him like sparks from a burning fire and are his parts (M U). By his own inscrutable power he rendered the properties of intelligence and joy imperceptible in the first, and his joy alone in the second, while the third has all the attributes perceptible in it. Simple Brahman as such has perceptible joy prevailing in it."

The following particulars have been gleaned from two works belonging to the Vallabhacharya Sect (*Suddhadvaita Martanda* by Giridhara and *Prameyaratnatrayana* by Balakrishna Bhatta, Chowkambha Sanskrit Series)

The whole world has Brahman for its material cause. The perception of forms apparently different from the *Brahman* is due to ignorance or delusion and to the true nature of the *Brahman* being rendered imperceptible. The individual soul is identical with *Brahman*, a part of *Brahman* and atomic. From the Aksara composed of existence, intelligence and joy (Sacchidananda) particles come

out as sparks from fire From the predominance of the *sat* portion in them the *joy* portion is concealed, and thus we have individual souls possessing *sat*, existence and *chit*, intelligence The individual soul is not a form of the Supreme Soul altered by a third thing being involved in it, such as the Maya (Illusive Power), but is itself the same substance as the Supreme Soul with one attribute rendered imperceptible The relation between the two is thus that of identity, (Advaita), both being in the pristine unchanged form, i.e., identity of untransformed souls (Suddhadvaita)

The individual soul is of two kinds (1) going through the circle of existences, and (2) delivered from the trammels of life The first is subject to misery in consequence of his delusion that his body and his senses are his soul He remains in this condition till he acquires knowledge, sees the vanity of the world, devotes himself to meditation and the love of God when he is delivered The delivered souls are (i) those who have become so, while in their previous condition, by the termination of ignorance or delusion, such as Sankara and others and (ii) those who dwell in the world of the Bhagavat, other than the pervading Vaikuntha, where they attain the condition of the pure Brahman by the favour of the Bhagavat, (iii) there are others, who, having the divine nature in them and coming in contact with good men, resort to various ways of Bhakti, or the propitiation of God, until perfect love alone for Him comes to dwell in their heart, and finally becomes the associates of the Bhagavat in his eternal sports and amusements This last is the highest Moksha or deliverance The souls who have the divine nature in them are of two kinds (1) those who subject themselves to certain moral discipline (Maryada Jiva) and (2) those who depend entirely on God's Grace (Pushti Jiva) Both attain final

deliverance, but there is a difference which corresponds to that between (ii) and (iii) above and which will be further explained below

Sri Krishna is the highest Brahman He has hands and feet not made of ordinary matter (*Aprakrita*), but celestial His body consists of *Sat* existence, *Chit*, intelligence, *Ananda*, joy He is called, Purushotama, as the most excellent of all beings, and has all attributes which are not ordinary but celestial All his sports are eternal He with his four arms or two arms sports with his various devotees or Bhakthas, in the extensive Vaikuntha, which contains Brindavana with his large forests Krishna is therefore the highest Joy (*Paramananda*) By His will His Sattva portion overcomes the *Ananda* or joy portion and, becoming *Aksara* or unchangeable, he is the cause of all causes, and creates the world Then *Aksara* Brahman is of two kinds (1) that which is recognised by the devotees as the place of Purushottama, which has the attributes of the extensive Vaikuntha and others (2) to the enlightened it appears in the form of Existence, Intelligence and Joy, infinite in time and space, self-manifesting and devoid of all qualities Therefore in the form in which the enlightened see it, all the positive qualities are hidden or rendered imperceptible by the inscrutable power referred to above, and therefore they are not to be regarded as non-existing When Brahman is spoken of as devoid of all qualities, what is meant is just this There are thus three forms of the Supreme Being, Purushottama and the two kinds of the Unchangeable here mentioned To explain the controlling of all by Purushottama, that form of his that dwells in the sun, the gods, the earth, etc, is called *Antaryamin* (the inward controller) It is this inward controller that becomes incarnate in the various forms usually mentioned The celestial

or Sattva quality of Krishna becomes Vishnu, and in this form he becomes the Protector of all. Similarly the qualities of Rajaś and Tamas assume the forms of Brahmadeva and Siva for discharging the functions of creation and destruction

Pushti is the grace (Anugraha) of God which is to be inferred from its fruit or the results, which are ordinary, or of this world, and extra ordinary, or of the next world Mahapushti or the highest grace is that which removes great obstacles and conduces to the attainment of God Himself Pushti enables one to attain the four objects of life Extraordinary or special Pushti conduces to Bhakti, which leads to the attainment of God The Bhakti or devotion generated by this special grace is called Pushtibhakti The frame of mind generated by this kind of devotion is the desire of the attainment of God to the exclusion of everything else This Pushtibhakti is of four kinds (1) Pravaha Pushtibhakti, (2) Maryada Pushtibhakti, (3) Pushti Pushtibhakti, (4) Suddha-Pushtibhakti The first is the path of those who, while engaged in a worldly life with its *me* and *mine*, which is compared to a stream (Pravaha) do acts calculated to bring about the attainment of God The second is of those who, withdrawing their minds from worldly enjoyments, devote themselves to God by hearing discourses about him, singing his name, and such other processes The third is of those who already enjoying God's grace are made by another grace competent to acquire knowledge useful for adoration, and thus they come to know all about the ways of God The followers of this path have to depend on their own efforts for the acquisition of knowledge referred to The fourth is of those who through mere love devote themselves to the singing and praising of God as if it were a haunting passion This Bhakti is generated by God himself and does not depend on

man's will as the third, mentioned above, does First a liking for himself is generated by God in the mind of a man to whom His grace extends Then a man sets about acquiring knowledge about God, and all this is called Premabhakti (love—adoration) Now the stages in the development of this are as follows (1) Love or liking (Preman), (2) Attachment or addictedness (Asakti), (3) a haunting passion which is the mature condition of the first two (Vyasana) The haunting passion leads to the attainment of the end, that is, the highest bliss Those in whom Bhakti has attained to this pitch reject with scorn the four kinds of Muktī and choose the eternal service of Hari, as noticed in the section on the Pancharatra system By the haunting passion about Hari he is seen everywhere, and therefore everything becomes an object of love, and the devotee identifies himself with everything Then the inner and the outer world is, for the devotee, full of Purushottama, or the highest soul The final fruit of this devotion is admission to the eternal sports of Krishna The Bhaktas join in these sports, assuming the forms of cows, beasts, birds, trees rivers, etc., and enjoy the company of Purushottama which confers boundless joy These external sports are like those which Krishna went through when he became incarnate in Braja and Brindavana Some of the devotees become in the celestial Brindavana Gopas and Gopis and join in the sports The Maryada bhaktas attain Muktī, called Sayujya, which consists in being one with Hari The Pushtibhaktas reject it with scorn and seek for participation in the sports of Hari "

#### THE PROGRESS OF THE SECT

We have already described to some extent the progress of the sect in treating of the descendants of Vallabha and their work How the Vallabhaites came to have *gadis* and *mandirs* in the various cities

of Rajasthan and Gujarat, how their influence arose and extended, will be best seen in the following account of the Nathdwara shrine, taken from Tod. The description also contains an account of the views and worship of the votaries and of the large bounties and gifts they made unto their deity.

"When Aurangazeb proscribed Krishna and rendered his shrines impure throughout Brij, Rana Raj Singh 'offered the heads of one hundred thousand Rajputs for his service,' and the God was conducted by the route of Kotah and Rampoora to Mewar. An omen decided the spot of his residence.

Here no blood stained sacrifice scares the timid devotee, no austerities terrify or tedious ceremonies fatigue him, he is taught to cherish the hope that he has only to ask for mercy in order to obtain it and to believe that the compassionate Deity who guarded the lapwings' nest in the midst of myriads of combatants, who gave beatitude to the courtesan who as the wall crushed her pronounced the name of Rama, will not withhold it from him who has quitted the world and its allurements, that he may live only in His Presence, be fed by the food prepared for Himself and yield up his last sigh invoking the name of Hari. There have been two hundred individuals at a time, many of whom, stipulating merely for food, raiment and funeral rites, have abandoned all to pass their days in devotion at the shrine, men of every condition, Rajput, merchant, and mechanic, and where sincerity of devotion is the sole expiation, and gifts outweigh penance, they must feel the [road smooth to the heaven of hope.

There is no donation too great or too trifling for the acceptance of Krishna from the baronial estate to a patch of meadow land, from the gemmed coronet to adorn His image to the widow's mite, nor, as before observed, is there a principality in

India which does not diminish its fisc to add to his revenues

It has been mentioned that the lands of Mewar appropriated to the Shrine are equal in value to a baronial appanage, and, as before observed, there is not a principality in India which does not assign a portion of its domain or revenue to this object The Hara Princes of Kotah and Boondi are almost exclusive worshippers of Kanbya Everything at Kotah appertains to Kanbya The Prince has but the usufruct of the palace, for which £12 000 are annually transmitted to the Shrine The grand lake, east of the town, with all its fiony tennants, is under his especial protection, and the extensive suburb adjoining with its rents, lands and transit duties, belong to the God Zalim Singh moreover transmits to the high priest the most valuable shawls, broadcloths and horses His favourite son also, a child of love is called Govardhan Das, the 'slave of Govardhan' one of the many titles of Kanbya The Prince of Marwar went mad from the murder of the high priest of Jalindra The Raja of Shirapur, the Slave of Radha' such was the name of this prince) almost lived in the temple and danced before the statue"

There were however two features in the Vaishnavite religion thus established, which in course of time became fruitful of evil The one was the excessive resort to mythologic worship which in the end grew into sheer idolatry, and the other, an absolute insistence on reverence to the Guru which led to very dangerous consequences The cult of a Personal God was the greatest gift that Vaishnavism gave to Medieval India but the Vallabhaites, by elaborating a vast and idolatrous scheme of temple and image worship, sadly fell away from the teachings of the original reformers The necessity of a pure and virtuous life of high ethics and of a real culture of the heart was lost

sight of and in their place came a snowy and meaningless worship of images and men. The other doctrine, that of implicit reference to the Guru represented in Rajasthan in latter days by a number of ignorant and uncultured men led to most serious results. It was thought that in order to attain salvation one should literally sacrifice body, wealth and all to the Guru. This corruption led to draw admonition in a Sanskrit drama entitled *Pakhanda Dhama Khandana* (The Smashing of Heretical Religion) written about A.D. 1639, about a hundred years after the death of Vallabha.

The *Sutradhara* says to the *Nati*—‘O Dear the Vedas have fled somewhere, no one knows the story of their flight. The Sankhya and the Yoga systems, the Puranas and the Smritis—they all have sunk into the bowels of the earth. Now young damsels look to the self dedication (*Atma-nivedanam*) preached by Shrimat Vallabha Vittaleswara who has conspired to ruin the meaning of the Vedas.

Enters a Vaishnava, wearing round his neck, in his ears, hand, head and round his waist garlands of *tulas*, and adorned with the mark of *Gopichandan* in his forehead. He constantly utters ‘Radha’ ‘Krishna’, with heart turned away from the Vedas and the scriptures, he rebukes the religious. He finds at every step crowds of women filled with *lana*. He goes about kissing the female Vaishnava.

Ye Vaishnavas, Ye Vaishnavas, hear the excellent Vaishnava doctrine—the embracing and clasping with the arms the large eyed damsels, good drinking and eating making no distinction between your own and another's offering one's self and life to the Guru he is in the world the cause of salvation. Mutual dining, dalliance with women during night and day, and forming endless friendships—these are the surpassing beautiful doings of those who have consecrated their souls to Shri Gokulesha. Charity, devotion, meditation, the Vedas and a crore of sacrifices—they are nothing. The chief religion of the worshippers of Vallabha is the offering of one's son, daughter and wife—not the worship of Brahmins learned in the Vedas, not the observance of hospitality, the *Shraddhas* and the *Vratas*.

For effects such as these, one can have nothing but severe condemnation. But we have reasons to think that such evil effects were not

always there, nor did they remain unchallenged. We may set against this the estimate given by Tod, the sole and sympathetic historian of the Rajputs

The predominance of the mild doctrines of Kanhya over the dark rites of Siva is doubtless beneficial to Rajput society Were the prevention of immolation the sole good resulting from their prevalence, that alone would conciliate our partiality, a real worshipper of Vishnu should forbid his wife following him to the pyre, as did recently the Boondi prince In fact their tenderness to animal life is carried nearly to as great an excess as with the Jains who shed no blood Celibacy is not imposed upon the priests of Kanhya, as upon those of Siva, on the contrary they are enjoined to marry, and the priestly office is hereditary by descent They inculcate mercy towards all beings, though whether this feeling influences the mass must depend on the soil which receives the seed I have often smiled at the incessant aspirations of the Macchiarelli of Rajasthan Zalim Singh, who, while he ejaculated the name of the God as he tolled his beads, was inwardly absorbed by the mundane affairs, and when one word would have prevented civil war and saved his reputation from the stain of disloyalty to his prince he was, to use his own words at four score years and upwards, laying the foundation for another century of life And thus it is with the Prince of Marwar But fortunately the princely worshippers of Kanhya are few in number, *it is to the sons of commerce we must look for the effects of these doctrines and it is my pride and duty to declare that I have known men of both sects, Vishnu and Jain, whose integrity was spotless, and whose philanthropy was unbounded*

#### RAJASTHANI ART AND POETRY

The great and lasting influence of the noble Vaishnavism taught by Vallabha and his descendants is chiefly to be seen in the arts and poetry of Rajasthan and of Gujarat We have already adverted to them but here at the close we propose to go into them with a little detail

#### VERNACULAR POETRY

As in other provinces, the religious revival brought about a literary revival whose effects were visible even so late as the last century The chief works, as all Vaishnavite works in that mediæval age were, are chiefly of a mystic or humanitarian

character They may be divided into two classes, those essentially mystic or theological, like the several treatises by the Gosains and their disciples, and those of a purely literary character like the works of Kesavalal and Jeswant Singh, which however, bear evidence of Vaishnavite thought and inspiration

The works of the first group are not of high literary or artistic merit, often they are mainly intended to confirm and extend the influence of the Gosains The same, however, cannot be said of the devotional treatises and poems and renderings of old Vaishnavite classics which belong to this class These, like the poems of Sur Das or the *Prem Sagar* of Chaturbhuj Misra, have attracted more than local repute The poems of Sur Das, alike in their diction and high mystical feeling, have been to Western Hindi what the poems of Kabir and Tulsī Das have been to Eastern Hindi

The *Prem Sagar*, though professedly a rendering in Hindi verse of the 10th Skandha of the Bhagavata, is fraught with exquisite poetry and discovers in its simple narration a deep spirit of humanity and love and a mystical and tender devotion to God

The second class comprises works of a purely literary character, chiefly treatises on Rhetoric Though didactic in character, they contain numerous beautiful songs, composed by way of illustration, wrought with Vaishnavite love and mysticism In the poems dealing with the moods of various *Nayikas* in Kesava Lal's *Rasikapriya*, one finds strange notes of Vaishnavite longing and reverie Behari Lal's *Sat Sayi* is another, a collection of 700 verses said to have been composed to illustrate the forms and rules of metre A learned critic has said that 'it is one of the daintiest pieces of art in any Indian

language Bound by the rules of metre, each verse had a limit of forty-six syllables and sometimes contained less Nevertheless each was a complete picture in itself Some pictures of Krishna's wooing and the timid bride are charmingly graceful "

#### RAJPUT PAINTINGS

Greater than Rajput poetry was Rajput art, which, divided into two schools, that of the Hill valleys and that of the cities of Rajasthan, flourished with increasing beauty and power as long as the Vaishnavite inspiration lasted We have already referred to a monumental study of the art recently given to the world by Dr Ananda Coomaraswamy and the following remarks are based on the same

The Rajput art, Kangra and Rajasthani alike, is essentially Vaishnavite in character Its themes are the same as those of contemporary Rajput poetry and religion , both are pre occupied with the same sense of a Kind and Beauteous God, with the same eager longing and mystical devotion, with the same delight in Nature and pure things The painters deal in wonderful line and colour with the same anecdotes and legends—the Ras Lila, the Playing on the Flute, the Loves of Radha, the Quelling of the Kaliya—which the profound poetry and religion of the times were already interpreting in terms of mystic love and faith But the paintings, however, are no mere translations in colour and line of the Vaishnavite legends but in themselves contain new revelations of Vaishnavite feeling Resembling a great deal the mediaeval Italian art that interpreted the Catholic Religion, the Rajput art is, however, less individualistic and more visionary and ardent

Of the two schools, the paintings of the Rajasthani school proper have not been as profusely illustrated in the book as those of the Kangra

and Jammu School But one or two of the great masterpieces are there to testify to the sublimity and mysticism of the art Plate IX in the book, containing a Head of Krishna is taken from a fuller piece which is found in the same author's *Indian Drawings* In that piece, Krishna, filled with a great ecstasy and beauty, dances in the midst of the *gopis* who play on musical instruments The motif represented is the great *Ras lila*, with its strange burden of mystical love and union *Ras lila*, it has been said, "is based upon undying and eternal truths, upon the permanent relations between Jiva and Iswara."

The paintings of the Hill valleys of Kangra and Jammu districts are more profuse and display a great mystical refinement and tenderness The physical type embodied in them is also very charming The earlier paintings, dating from the latter half of the 17th century, are characterised by a certain naivete and freshness—marks of true folk-art Krishna moves in the scenes represented, a handsome youth, the beloved of Radha and the adoration of women The paintings are fraught with the fragrance of flowers and the deep shade of summer woods, Intense passion and delight are there, there are great moods of ecstasy and devotion Radha waiting in the woods, half doubting whether Krishna loves her, is the most typical motif (Plates XXXVIII and XXXIX) But often more mystical moods are struck, Radha gently places her hand on Krishna, and, in half tremour and half joy, offers him a lotus. (Plate XLIII) Or when the monsoon winds suddenly blow and the rains do fall, they both, lover and beloved, stand together under the covering of a blanket (Plate LVII) Here are exquisite movements of ardour and love, of mystic union and faith But as the art progresses, as spiritual reverie gains in intensity, all yearning and longing

are submerged , the consciousness of a new Beauty and a new Presence, alone survives Krishna stands forth as the Divine Presence, the great celestial Beauty communicating its quality to the very woods and flowers, suffusing the sky, land, men and women with its own music The *Krishna Dhudadharī* (Plate LI) is the masterpiece of this art Krishna shines as the very embodiment of Divine Love and Beauty, his companions too are beautiful , and the very cows and the women peeping from the windows breathe the same music Paintings like these, in the words of Dr A K Coomaraswamy, "have for us this lesson that what we cannot discover at home and in the familiar events, we cannot discover anywhere The Holy Land is the land of our own experience All is in all and if beauty is not apparent to us in the well known, we shall not find it in things that are strange and far away "

Surely then a religion which could inspire such tender and imaginative poetry—which could give rise to such a beautiful and visionary art—could not have been base or idolatrous

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# TULASI DAS

## INTRODUCTION

Of the several Vaishnavite schools that arose in North India in the middle ages, the oldest and one founded on orthodox traditions was that established by Nimbarka (19th century A.D.) Perhaps a monk from the South (Nimbapura, Bellary District), he was a well read Vaishnava philosopher and mystic and had his head quarters at Muttra. In two works, one a commentary on the Brahma Sutras, and another a small poem entitled *Dasasloki*, he propounded a pure form of the Visishtadvaitic philosophy and linked it to the worship of the Supreme as incarnate in Krishna-Radha. Some time later, another missionary, also belonging to South India (Melukote, Mysore), came with a liberalised Vaishnavism. There are evidences to show that Ramananda's sect, of all the sects that arose in North India, was the most intimately associated with the classic Vaishnavism of South India. Contrary to Nimbarka, he wrote and sang in the vernacular and linked the Vaishnavite teaching to the worship of the Supreme as incarnate in Rama-Sita. He had his head quarters at Benares. All the various sects that arose in Mediæval India in later days—the Kabir panthis, the Sikhs, the Dadupanthis etc., on the one hand—the Ramawats, the Vallabhacharis, the Radha-vallabhis, the Charandas on the other—the one class fully protestant and the other, reformed and Vaishnavite can be traced to the teachings and labours of these two early apostles of Vaishnavism.

As a result of the teaching of these reformers, the two centuries—the 16th and 17th—were a period of great religious activity and reform in North India. A number of sects arose, and also

a number of gifted mystics and saints both within and outside those sects, of whom full accounts are preserved in Nabhaj's *Bhalthamal*, later on amplified by Priya Das. As we study those lives, we feel we are in a new world of mysticism, of religious love and fervour. Religion, it was proclaimed, was the property of all from the highest to the lowest, and as a result men of all conditions and castes from the Dom and the Chamar to the Brahman and the Kshatriya gathered together under the shadow of the new gospel. The faith too which the philosopher and mystic were now teaching was that of a Personal and Living God endowed with every gracious attribute and accessible to seeking souls. While some harked back in their love and adoration to the older divinities of the land—to Rama Sita and Krishna Radha—others took refuge in the *Sabda*, "the Unutterable Word."

Both these phases of the reformed religion—one clustering round the old divinities, and the other protestant—are fully represented and embodied in the poetry of the age. Hindi, with its two dialects, the Eastern and the Western, is full of the literature of this movement. If the poems of Kabir form the high water mark of the more rational and protestant faith, the *Ramayana* of Tulasi Das is the greatest expression of the more orthodox Vaishnavism. The *Ramayana* is not however void of a power of appeal even to the protestant sects. Even as Dante summed up the thought and faith of Medieval Catholicism in his great epic, so also Tulasi Das has summed up all the longing and philosophy of Medieval Vaishnavite India. Out of all that spiritual rapture and yearning of Medieval India, represented by various sects, Vaishnavite and protestant, the *Ramayana* of Tulasi Das rises as some great piece of divine music. To all the various sects—to the believers in Rama, in Krishna,

to the believers in the *Sabda*, even to the believers in the sword, the *Ramayana* remains the embodiment of their faith, the Gospel of the Supreme and Transcendent Being that can be approached by all in love and simple faith

#### TULASI DAS'S BIRTH AND PARENTAGE

Tulasi Das was a Sarayuparina Brahman by birth. Some say that he belonged to the Kanyakubja division of the Brahman caste, but, as the Brahmans of the latter class condemn begging, the taking of presents and the like, and as Tulasi Das distinctly says in his *Kabitavali* 'I was born in a family which begged,' it is certain that he belonged to the former division. Tradition adds that he belonged to the *Parasara gotra* of that clan. The most trustworthy accounts state that he was born in Samvat 1589 (A.D. 1532). His birth however was unfortunate, it took place under a conjunction of stars (called *Abhuktha Mula*) which was considered to portend death to the parents. Therefore, to avoid danger to themselves, the parents abandoned Tulasi Das who seems to have been picked up by some Sadhu and cherised by him. The fact of his abandonment is corroborated by one of his own verses in the *Binaya Patila* where he says "My father and mother brought me into being and then abandoned me, and God Himself created me without good fortune and forsook me." An orphan, then with parents, he lived and wandered with the Sadhu and learnt from him and his associates the story of Rama, as he himself tells us. The name, Tulasi Das, was probably given to him by the Sadhu, for his original name was different. A traditional stanza gives the following as the names of Tulasi Das's parents and others—Father's name—Atmaram Sokla Dube, mother's name—Hulasi, spiritual preceptor's name—Narahari, father in law's name—Dina Bandhu Pathak, Tulasi's

wife's name—Ratnavali, and son's—Tarak Tulasi Das's own name was Ram Bola. Various places claim the honour of his birth, but according to Grierson, Tari in the Doab seems to have the best claim.

In his youth Tulasi Das studied at Sukral shetia (modern Soron). He was married to Ratnavali in his father's life time, and after the latter's death, lived contentedly as a householder and begat a son. Tulasi Das seems to have belonged to or joined the Vaishnava Order established by Ramananda some generations ago. "It would be incorrect however to call him a strict adherent of the sect." In the *Ramayana* he himself tells us that he has followed many scriptures, and now and then he alludes to the nirvaisesha advaita teaching of Sankaracharya, with its maya and nirguna Brahm. A great friend of his was Madhusudhana Saraswati who was a follower of the doctrine of Sankiracharya.

#### TULASI DAS'S CONVERSION

If we may believe the story, Tulasi Das was passionately devoted to his wife. After the son had been born, one day, when Tulasi Das came home, he found that his wife, without letting him know, had gone to her father's house. Full of the lover's grief, he followed her there in the night and on meeting her was received by her with the following words "Have you no love for Rama? My body is but a framework of skin and bone." Immediately on hearing these words, Tulasi became 'converted' and set out again for his own village. His wife who had by no means intended to produce so violent a reaction, followed calling him back, and asking him to stay and eat that she might return with him. But "what could a fan do in the face of a whirlwind?" Tulasi Das from that moment became an ascetic.

and, abandoning home and family ties, wandered about a released worshipper of Rama He made Ayodhya, and subsequently Benares, his headquarters, from which he frequently visited such places as Mathura, Brindaban, Kurukshetra, Prayag and Purushotampuri

#### INCIDENTS IN HIS LIFE

On one of his journeys, Tulasi Das, after visiting Bhriguashraman and other places, went and stayed at Gay Ghat, being attracted by the devotion of its king, Gambhira Deva He thence went to Brahmapur to visit the Saivite shrine there From Brahmapur he went to Kant (in Shahabad), there not only did he find no place where he could get any food but was distressed to see the people devoted to the customs and manners of female demons A cowherd (*abhuva* or *ahir*) of the place however was very kind to him Mangar Ahir—that was the name of the cowherd—had a cattle yard in the open plain, where he used to offer hospitality to holy men With great humility he invited Tulasi Das thither and gave him some milk which the poet boiled down into *khoa* and ate He then asked Mangar to ask for a boon and the latter begged first that he might be endowed with perfect faith in the Lord, and that his family which was short lived might be a long-lived one Tulasi Das replied "If you and your family commit no thefts, (the Ahirs are notorious for their robbery) and avoid causing affliction to any person, your desire will be fulfilled" It is now claimed that the blessing has been fulfilled The story is still well known both in Balia and Shahabad Districts In 1889 A D , says G A Grierson, the representative of this Ahir family was an old man by name Bibari Ahir and the family is noted for its ready hospitality and freedom from theft From Kant, Tulasi Das went to a place called Bela Pataut where he

met a Pundit and a Kshatriya. They two received him with great hospitality. The poet complained that the name of the town Bela Patant was not a good one and suggested its being changed into Raghunathpur, by which, he said, hundreds of thousands of men would be continually uttering the name of Rama when speaking of it. The town has ever since been known by that name.

#### THE COMPOSITION OF THE "BINAYA PATRIKA"

One day a murderer came on a pilgrimage, crying 'For the love of Rama, cast alms to me a murderer.' Tulasi, hearing the beloved name, called him to his house, gave him sacred food which had been consecrated to the gods, declared him purified and sang praises in honour of his deity. The Brahmans of Benares held an assembly and sent for him, asking 'How was the murderer's sin absolved?' and 'How had he eaten with him?' Tulasi replied, 'Read ye your scriptures. Their truth hath not yet entered into your hearts. Your intellects are not yet ripe, and they remove not the darkness from your souls.' They replied that they knew the power of the Name as recorded in the scriptures. 'But this man is a murderer, how can he obtain salvation?' Tulasi asked them to name some proof by which he could convince them, and they at length agreed that if the sacred bull of Shiva would eat from the murderer's hand they would confess themselves wrong. The man was taken to the temple, and the bull at once ate out of his hand. Thus did Tulasi teach that the repentance of even the greatest sinner is accepted by the Lord. The miracle had the effect of converting thousands of men, and making them lead holy lives. The result enraged the Kaliyuga (personified present age of sin) who came to the poet and threatened him saying, "Thou hast become a stumbling block

in my kingdom of wickedness, I will straightforwardly devour thee, unless thou promise to stop this increase of piety " Full of terror, Tulasi confided all to Hanuman who consoled him telling him he was leading a blameless life and advising him to become a complainant in the Court of the Lord Himself " Write a *Binaya Patrila*, a petition of complaint, and I shall get an order passed on it by the Master and will be empowered to punish the Kaliyuga Without such an order I cannot punish him, for he is the king of the present age " The *Binaya Patrila*, is a collection of beautiful and touching hymns addressed to Rama What is of unique importance here is the story of how he took into his fellowship and love a man guilty of homicide itself, and converted him by his charity and loving kindness into a true Ramabhaktha

#### THE "RAM CHARIT MANAS"

Tulasi Das at first resided in Ajodhya as a Smarta Vaishnava, and here the Lord Rama is said to have appeared to him in a dream and to have commanded him to write a *Ramayana* in the vernacular language used by the common people He commenced it in the year 1574 A D, when he was forty two years old When he had got as far as the *Aanya Kand*, differences arose between him and the Vairagi Vaishnavas with whose regulations about food he could not comply, and as a result he left Ajodhya for Benares where he completed the poem He settled in Benares at Asighat, near the Lolarka kund A ghat on the Ganges near this place is still called the Tulasi ghat Close by is a temple in honour of Hanuman, said to have been built by the poet

#### TULASI DAS AND THE PANDITS

It is said that, after Tulasi Das had finished his great poem, one day, when he was bathing at the Manikarnika ghat, a pandit who was proud

of his knowledge of Sanskrit came up to him and said "Reverend Sir, your honour is a learned Sanskrit Pandit Why, therefore, did your honour compose an Epic poem in the vulgar tongue?" Tulasi Das replied "My language in the vulgar tongue is imperfect, I admit, but is better than the *nayika vannanas* of you, Sanskrit knowing gentlemen" "How is that?" asked the Pandit. "Because," said Tulasi—

If thou find a jewelled vessel full of poison and an earthen cup full of ambrosia, which wilt thou refuse and which wilt thou accept? Tell me this after considering the matter

Ghanshyama Sukla was a great Sanskrit poet, but used to prefer writing poems in the vernacular. They were on religious topics and a pandit reproached him for this, telling him to write in Sanskrit in the future adding that God would be pleased thereby, Ghanashyama replied that he would ask Tulasi Das about it and do what he advised. He then laid the whole matter before the poet who replied—

Whether it be in the vulgar tongue or whether it be in Sanskrit, all that is necessary is true love for the Lord. When a rough woollen blanket is wanted to protect one in the storm, who takes out a silken vest?

There is quite a long passage in the introduction to the *Ramayan* in which he vindicates his style against the critics.

My lot is low, my purpose high, but I am confident of one thing, that the good will be gratified to hear me though fools may laugh. The laughter of fools will be grateful to me—as they have no taste for poetry nor love for Rama. I am glad that they should laugh. If my homely speech and poor wit are fit subjects for laughter, let them laugh, it is no fault of mine. If they have no understanding of true devotion to the Lord, the tale will seem insipid enough, but to the true and orthodox worshippers of Hari and Hara the story of Raghubar will be sweet as honey.

In thus upholding the dignity of the vernacular tongue, Tulasi Das was responding to a widespread democratic feeling which Vaishnavism

had generated in the minds of many another mystic and reformer of mediæval India Jnandev wrote his commentary on the Gita in the vernacular and the great mystics and reformers that followed him did the same In Bengal the early poets Vidyapathi and Chandi Das wrote their mystic idylls in the vernacular and the later school of Vaishnavism that arose under Chaitanya paid the same reverence to the vernacular and composed its works therein

#### DEATH OF TODAR MAL

The famous Todar Mal, Akbar's minister, was one of Tulasi Das's friends and was an ardent devotee of Rama When he died (1589 A D) the poet wrote the following beautiful poem *In Memoriam*

A master of but four villages, but a mighty monarch of himself, Tulasi ! in this age of evil, the light of Todar hath set, Tulasi placed on his head the heavy burden of love for the Lord, but Todar could not bear the burden of the world on his shoulders and laid it down Tulasi's heart was like a pure watering basin in the gardeon of Todar's virtues When I think of it mine eyes overflow and become filled with tears of affection Todar hath gone to the dwelling place of the Lord, and therefore Tulasi refraineth his grief, but hard it is for him to live without his pure friend

We may add that the famous Maharaj Man Singh of Amber (A D 1618) and his brother Jagat Singh and other great princes were in the habit of visiting the poet and doing him reverence A man once asked why such great people came to see him now a days In former days no one came to see him Tulasi replied

Once did I beg and could not get even a cracked cowrie in alms Who wanted me, then for any need ? But Rama, the cherisher of the poor, made me of great price, I used to beg from door to door for alms, now kings worship my feet Saith Tulasi Then it was without Rama, Now Rama is my helper "

There is a legend of Tulasi Das having resuscitated a dead person when he was sent for by

the reigning king of Delhi (some say it was Shahjehan, but the poet died in 1623, five years before the former ascended the throne) The king is said to have asked the poet to perform some miracle The poet refusing, the king ordered him to be put in prison He was however miraculously rescued in the end by Rama's hosts

#### TULASI DAS'S VISIT TO BRINDABAN

The visit is thus described by Priya Das —

After returning to Kasi from Delhi, he went to Brindaban and met Nabhaaji and heard his poetry and his whole soul was filled with delight On visiting the shrine of Madan Gopal, he said Of a truth Rama is my special patron, I would fain see him Then appeared the God to him in that very form, and he was glad on beholding his incomparable beauty It was said to him 'The Krishna avatar is of the greatest renown Rama was *only a partial incarnation*' On hearing this, he said, 'My soul was full of love for him *only for the son of Dvaratha* and admired his incomparable beauty, now that you tell me of his divinity my love is increased twenty fold "

#### TULASI DAS'S CHARACTER

Tulasi Das seems to have possessed great tenderness and love for fellow beings The story of his conduct towards the murderer who came pronouncing the name of Rama has already been told Other stories are preserved which show the highly devout and charitable disposition of the poet "Once," says Priya Das

Some thieves came by night to thief and plunder Tulasi Das's goods, but beheld a cloud dark form with bow and arrows in his hand Whenever they moved the form approached them with ready shaft they were terrified and although they went round and round, they could not get rid of this watchman At day break, they came and asked Tulasi, 'O Sir, who is this dark complexioned lad of yours' On hearing this question, he remained silent and wept then gave away all that he had, knowing that Rama himself had been the watchman The thieves too were initiated and received instruction and became pure of heart,

#### TULASI DAS'S LAST DAYS AND DEATH

Tulasi Das returned to Benares and there resumed his life of poetic activity and inward

adoration. He lived to a good old age he was ninety one when he died (1623 A.D.) His last words are said to be as follows —

I have sung the glory of the name of Rama and now would I be silent. Now place yo the gold and the leaf of tulasi into Tulasi's mouth.

#### TULASI DAS'S POETRY AND WORKS

Mr G A Grierson thus describes Tulasi Das's works —

Some score of works are attributed to him but only twelve or greater and six less are certainly his. The most noteworthy are the *Ramayana* (more properly *Ram Charit Manas*) the *Gitarah*, the *Kabitatala* and the *Linaya Patra*. I have selected these four names on account of the various aspects of his poetic work which they illustrate. Commentators say that there are three ways of looking at *Rama* we may look at the tender side of his character (*Vadhurya*) its majestic side (*Lisanya*) and its complex side (*Vivrita*) in which tenderness and majesty are combined. There are four ways of singing his praises as a *magantha* or panegyrist, as a *tandin* or bard as a *suta* or *pauranika* i.e. a historical poet and as an *arthin* or suppliant. A work in which the complex view of Rama's character together with his glory and his power is celebrated is called a *charita* and is sung by a *suta*. His tenderness should be sung by a *magantha* and his majesty by a *tandin* while entreaties addressed to him should be sung by an *arthin*.

The most famous of Tulasi Das's poems is undoubtedly the *Ramayana* or *Ram Charit Manas*. Its name shows that it is a *Charita*. The poet writes in the character of a *suta* and deals with the complex side of his hero's character. To put the fact in line with our English ideas we may say that it corresponds to an epic poem. In its own country it is supremo over all other literature and exercises an influence which it would be difficult to describe in exaggerated terms. Its style varies with the subject. There is the infinite pathos of the passage describing Rama's farewell to his mother the rugged language describing the horrors of the battlefield and when occasion requires it a sententious aphoristic method of dealing with narrative which teems with similes drawn not from the traditions of schools but from nature herself. His characters too live and move with all the dignity of a heroic age. They are not colourless phantoms which he clothes with beautiful imagery, but are real beings each with his well defined perona.

lity His characters are as life like and distinct as any in Occidental literature. It would be a great mistake to look upon Tulasi Das as merely an ascetic. He was a man that had lived. He had been a householder (a word of much meaning to an Indian) and had known the pleasures of wedded life, the joy of clasping an infant son to his bosom and the sorrow of losing that son ere he had attained his prime. He appealed not to scholars, but to his native countrymen as a whole—the people that he knew. He had mixed with them, begged from them, prayed with them, taught them, experienced their pleasures and their yearnings. He had wandered far and wide and had contracted intimate friendships with the greatest men of his time.

His *Gitaish* is a work of a different character. Like the epic, it narrates the career of Rama but the poetic 'flavour' of 'tenderness' reigns supreme. It may be called the Gospel of the Infant Rama. The greatest portion devoted to the childhood of Rama is a charming and most poetical account of his and his brother's baby lives.

The *Kabitatali* also deals with the life of Rama but here we have a work in the heroic style. The *Imaya Patrila* is an altogether different work. Here the poet is a suppliant.

These four poems are the most important works of the poet dealing with the story of Rama. Conceived in the various forms of poetical composition, conveying, each in accordance with its poetical *rasa*, the sublime mystical longing of the poet and his vision of Godhead, they are a great religious and spiritual asset to the Hindi-speaking peoples of Northern India. The object which Tulasi Das had in mind in composing this great epic was not merely to tell in beautiful verse a wonderful story, but to use it as a vehicle for preaching the supreme value of the worship of Rama. Though Tulasi Das accepted, like other leaders of the Vaishnava movement, the pantheistic teaching of the Vedanta, it was tempered, says a writer in the *Heritage of India Series*, "by belief in a personal God, whom he identified with the incarnation Rama. His poem is a passionate appeal to men to devote themselves to the worship of this God."

### THE RELIGION OF TULASI DAS

We have already said that Tulasi Das's poetry embodies the greatest expression of mediæval Vaishnavism "The theology of Tulasi Das", says a recent writer,

resolves itself into a very simple proposition 'Bhagavan is the Supreme and He is incarnate in Rama!' Other gods are allowed their place, but they do not compete with Rama. It is He alone and all others are His servants (?) He is benevolent as well as powerful and has very tender care for men. In Him men may find the complete satisfaction of all their needs. Hence it becomes a question of the first importance—How are men to know and be linked with Him? To this we have the answer in a single word, *Bhakti*. It is true that there are other things besides, penance, alms giving sacrifice, worship, repetition of the name, etc., but just as the gods stand grouped around Bhagavan for their glory, so these stand in their due position as planets around the central sun.

*Bhakti* has been defined by a learned translator of a Sanskrit treatise on the same as follows —

It is an affection fixed upon the Lord. It is not knowledge, for devils may know—not worship for the formal may worship—not work although pure and unselfish work may lead to it—nor is it belief. It finds its fruit in respect for the Adorable, sorrow for sin and celebration of His service.

"*Bhakti* seems to come very near to the living 'faith' of Saint Paul, says the Rev Carpenter in his *Theology of Tulasi Das* in that it is the outgoing of the whole being to a Personal and Supreme God, the contemplation of whose 'freedom from all limitation' in Tulasi Das begets separation from ignorance and sin, just as the contemplation of His 'holiness' in Saint Paul, brings about repentance concerning sin, and meditation on whose goodness begets gratitude, and a desire for nearness and vision prompts to whole hearted service."

Tulasi Das, "founded no sect, and indeed added nothing to the theology of that school of Hinduism to which he belonged, but there is no doubt that the *Ramayan* has been the most potent factor in making Vaishnavism the accepted cult of the vast majority of Hindus in North India to day"

## NANAK'S SUCCESSORS

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GURU ANGAD (1539—1552)

NANAK never dreamed that the office of Guru which he had created would become hereditary. When he saw that his end was approaching he named Lubna, one of his faithful disciples, as his successor. Lubna gave ocular proof of his fidelity and Nanak declared that from that moment his own spirit had gone into Lubna's body and that he must be regarded as Nanak himself. His name was changed from Lubna to Angi Khud or Angad (my own body). Thus arose the belief common among the Sikhs that the spirit of Nanak was inherited by each successive Guru.

The Sikh religion would in all probability have gradually completely died out and sunk into oblivion as had been the lot of many others had it not been for the foresight and wisdom of its founder in establishing an apostolic succession and thereby creating a spirit of aspiration and ambition in his followers which insured to a great extent its perpetuation (Muhammad Latif—*History of the Punjab*—p. 270).

Guru Angad was hardly possessed of any greatness of his own, but he tried hard to spread the religion of Nanak and committed to writing much about his great predecessor "both that which he himself remembered and that which was narrated to him by Bala, the old companion of Nanak." He put into writing also the result of his own observations which were later incorporated into the *Adi Granth*. He gained his livelihood by the work of his own hand, twisting coarse yarn and twine and died after a ministry of 18 years in 1552. He had two sons, both of whom were of a worldly mind, he considered neither of them worthy to succeed him and

"bestowed his apostolic blessing upon Amar Das, an assiduous follower "

### GURU AMAR DAS (1552—74)

Amar Das was also like his predecessor, a man of humble birth, a Khatri of the Bhalla clan. He earned his livelihood by acting as a carrier of goods, his pony being the only property which he possessed. He never used to eat anything from the Guru's store house while he was a servant of Angad and every night he used to bring fresh water from the river for the ablutions of his Guru, and walked for this purpose 2 hours forwards and back. His reverence to the Guru was so great that he never turned his back towards him and on all occasions used to walk backwards, i.e., with his face towards the Guru's house. Angad perceived his humility and faith and declared — "Amar is not homeless, but the home of the homeless, he who will follow him shall find his home with the Lord."

When Amar Das became Guru he established himself at Govindwal, the seat of his master, he soon gained great success as a teacher and preacher. He was very active in obtaining converts, and it is said that the great Akbar himself listened attentively to some of his sermons. He composed beautiful verse which were noted for their simplicity of diction and purity of idea and which were later incorporated in the *Adi Granth*. It was Amar Das that effectively separated the *Udasis* (an inert and torpid sect founded by Sri Chand, a son of Nanak) from the active and domestic Sikhs and thus "finally preserved the infant Church or state from disappearing as one of many sects" (Malcolm—*Sketch of the Sikhs* p 27). Following the policy of social reform initiated by Nanak, Amar Das boldly disapproved of *Sati* and encouraged the marriage of Hindu widows, declaring that "the

true Sati was she whom grief and not flame consumed," and that the woman who, bereft of her husband, nobly supported herself under the trial was indeed to be greatly praised

Amar Das built at Govindwal a *bawali* (large oblong tank) faced with stone steps, landing places and chambers for traveller's camping. Bathing in this tank, while repeating the *Japji* is considered very meritorious and a grand fair is still held at this *bawali* every year in memory of this Guru. Amar Das also sent many of his disciples to various parts of the country in order to preach the religion of Nanak.

He had a son Mohan and a daughter Mohans (*alias* Bheni) the latter was married to a handsome Khatri youth named Ram Das of the Sodhi sect. Thus were united the Bhallas and the Sodhis. Amar Das was so greatly pleased with the uniform filial love and obedience of his daughter that he passed over his son and all other disciples and bestowed his apostolic blessing upon his son in law Ram Das "The fond mother or ambitious woman is further stated to have obtained an assurance from the Guru that the succession should remain with her posterity"

#### GURU RAM DAS (1572—86)

Ram Das, a native of Lahore, was fully worthy of his master's choice as well as of the affectionate regard of his wife. Ram Das is declared to have been a man of wonderful eloquence and energy and given himself up largely to literary pursuits and poetical compositions. Some of his literary output has been incorporated in the *Adi Granth*. He is among the most revered of the Gurus but no rules or precepts of great practical value are attributed to him. In his time however the voluntary offering of his followers amounted to a large sum and the Guru was enabled to live in great

state, At Lahore he had an interview with the Empire Akbar and the latter found that his huge camp had contributed to a rise in the prices of food stuffs and that the Guru was greatly helping the poor and the distressed He was so favourably impressed with the Guru that as a mark of esteem and approbation he granted him a circular piece of land where the Guru restored an old tank which he renamed Amritsagar (Pool of Immortality) and in the midst of which he built a temple Round this tank grew up huts of *fakirs* and smaller temples where settled the disciple and followers of the Guru The new town was named Gurukachak and then same to be called *Amritsar* by which name it is known to this day

The great favour that the Guru enjoyed at the hands of Akbar increased his popularity among the Jats and the Zamindars who flocked round him and largely raised his fame and name He, by founding Amritsar, supplied the Sikhs with a rallying centre which was conveniently situated "Peaceful in mind and gentle in their behaviour, following yet the mild and pure tenets laid down by their first leader, they (the Sikhs) learnt to unite together and to foster and engender those feelings of brotherly love which tended to strengthen the national tie and paved the way to the formation of a commonwealth on true patriotic principles" (Latif: p 258)

#### GURU ARJUN SINGH (1581—1606) ARJUN AND AMRITSAR

Guru Arjun had been destined even in childhood for the Guruship by his maternal grandfather, Amar Das, who rightly prophesied that "this grandson of mine shall be a boat to take mankind across the ocean of the world" On the death of his father, Guru Ram Das, the accession of Arjun Singh was opposed by his eldest brother, Prithia,

to whom the Guru generously granted certain taxes and house rents and the trade duties of a ward of Amritsar. He likewise provided for the maintenance of his second brother on a generous scale, reserving for himself only the voluntary offerings of his faithful followers.

It was, as already seen, Guru Ram Das that dug the tank of Amritsar and laid the foundations of the city. Guru Arjun completed the construction of the tank and the city. The Guru also began actively the construction of the Har Mandir (Temple of God) which was already planned by his predecessor. When it was represented to the Guru that the temple should be raised higher than all the neighbouring buildings, he replied—' No what is laden with fruit, the more its branches descend to the earth. By whatever way you approach the temple, you must descend eight or ten steps wherefore let the Har mandir be made the lower edifice of all.' (Macauliffe, *The Sikh Religion Vol III p 9*) The temple was constructed opening on all sides and not merely on the east, towards the rising sun, as Hindu temples generally are. This meant that "Sikh worship was open to all and was not concerned with worship." The *Adi Granth* is placed in the middle of the Temple so that no human being might seat himself there. It was in A D 1581 that the foundation stone of the Temple was laid. A tradition runs that since the first brick laid by the Guru was accidentally displaced by a mason, the Guru prophesied that the foundation would have to be laid anew, and strangely enough the original edifice was pulled down by the Afghan invader, Ahmad Shah Abdali, in A D 1763, and only some time later did the Sikhs regain possession of the shrine which they rebuilt with greater splendour.

The Guru was greatly assisted by his followers in this grand task and made great rejoicings on

its completion On that occasion the Guru composed several hymns of which the following is one

"By bathing in the tank of Ram Das  
 All the sins that man committeth shall be done away  
 And he shall become pure by his ablutions  
 The perfect Guru hath given us this boon  
 When we meditate on the Guru's instruction,  
 God bestoweth all comfort and happiness,  
 And causeth the whole cargo to cross over safely  
 In the association of the saints uncleanness departeth,  
 And the Supreme Being abided with us  
 "Nanak by meditating on the Name  
 Hath found God the primal Being"

(Macauliffe—Vol III, p 13)

Under the Guru's fostering care the City of Amritsar rapidly increased in prosperity and population and the practice grew of the Sikhs bathing daily in the tank and going to the Temple to hear the Guru's hymns About 1590 the Guru laid the foundations of the town of the Taran—Taran (=raft to take men across the world's ocean) where a tank even larger than that of Amritsar was constructed, and of the town of Kartapur (the City of the Creator) in the Jalandhar Doab between the Beas and the Sutlej rivers At Lahore Arjun Guru planned the construction of the Guru's Bawali and his fame attracted Hindu Yogis and Mussalman fakirs while the Mussalman viceroy of the province was much impressed by his teachings and reformed his ways of life

#### ARJUN AND AKBAR

The Guru continued to be troubled by his envious brother Prithia whose jealousy was to a great extent fanned by his wife But by the blessings of Bhai Bhuda, an ancient Sikh of Guru Nanak's time, a son was born to the Guru, the future Guru Hri Govind 1606—45), and the jealousy of Prithia redoubled in vigour for he had been expecting that the oh Idless Guru would

be succeeded by his own son Prithia instigated Sulahi Khan, a Mussalman officer of the Lahore province, to plunder Amritsar on pretence of levying tribute from the city. For sometime the Guru was compelled to abandon his beloved city. After wandering about for two years the Guru returned to Amritsar where his brother's persecutions continued. At last Prithia went up to Delhi to lay before Akbar himself his grievances, thus anticipating any charges that the Guru might subsequently prefer against him.

The good Emperor Akbar would not listen to useless complaints against holy men and dismissed the petition of Prithia as false. It is also told that the Emperor had the *Adi Granth* examined by learned men and declared that he found therein nothing except love and devotion to God, and that he even made an offering of 15 gold mohurs to honour the book and gave dresses of honour to the Guru and his two chief disciples. Akbar is even said to have visited the Guru and to have been pleased greatly with the temple that he had constructed. He even called himself the Guru's slave and asked for instruction from him. Highly pleased with the Guru's hospitality and learning, Akbar remitted the revenues of the Panjab for that year in compliment to the Guru. Even the bigoted historian Badaoni mentions that Akbar was highly pleased with the teachings and character of Guru Arjun.

It is also told that the Emperor's trusted friend, Raja Birbal, the Brahmin, took a rooted dislike to Arjun Singh and got the Emperor's permission to levy a tax on Amritsar on his way to the North Western Frontier. The Guru refused to allow the tax to be imposed declaring that the Mughal government had not been imposing forced labour or taxes on the Guru's

house and that he would give away as much corn and food as Birbal required but no money. Strangely enough before Birbal had time to enforce his demand he was ordered to hasten to his campaign wherein he met a tragic death on the battle field, and the Sikhs attributed his sudden end to the result of the Guru's displeasure.

#### GURU ARJUN COMPILES THE ADI GRANTH

All the Gurus up to Arjun were also bards. Arjun himself composed many copious original songs of his own which are in part reproduced in English by Macauliffe. His greatest service was the collection of all the hymns of his predecessors in one volume "in order to be a guide to Sikhs for all time." In this *Adi Granth* he incorporated his own compositions as well as the choicest literary productions of other religious reformers of those times whose memory was still fresh in the popular mind. All that the book contained was pure and binding on all true disciples. A copy was to be kept in the Har Mandir and recited to the pilgrims and worshippers who came to bathe in the sacred tank.

It was in Arjun's time that the celebrated Gur Das flourished. Gur Das was in reality a contemporary of the 4th, 5th and 6th Gurus, and he compiled the *Gnan Ratnavali* consisting of 40 chapters each chapter containing a number of *pauris* of from five to ten lines. The book is written in very difficult old Punjabi. The writer gives great praise to Nanak and regards him as the successor of Veda Vyasa and the Prophet Mahomet, sent by God into the world to accomplish a holy mission and to redeem mankind. Bhai Gur Das writes of Sikh monotheism, Sikh unity, the attributes of a true disciple and the religious and secular observances of the Sikhs and declares that "the ordinary secular acts of a true Sikh are equal

to all the religious ceremonies performed by members of other religious denominations "

He puts in a nutshell the Sikh's catechism which is as follows —

"Q What is the Sikh's ablution ?

A To receive the Guru's instruction and with it wash away the filth of evil inclinations

Q What is a Sikh's badge ?

A A necklace of the Guru's words

Q What is a Sikh's life ?

A To be dead while alive and renounce pride

Q What is a Sikh's duty ?

A To obey the order of his Guru "

(Macauliffe—Vol IV—p 264 )

Bhai Gur Das declaims "against the bigotry of the Muhammadans and their ready resort to violence," he also denounces the asceticism of the Hindus and he exhorted all men to abandon evil ways and live the life of the righteous. The writings of Gur Das are, in the estimation of Captain Cunningham "rather figurative descriptions of actual affairs than simple hymns in praise of God, but they deserve attention as expounding Nanak's object of a gradual fusion of Muhammadans and Hindus into common observers of a new and better creed and as an almost contemporary instance of the conversion of a noble but obscure idea of an individual into the active principle of a multitude and of the gradual investiture of a simple fact with the gorgeous mythism of memory and imagination" (*History of the Sikhs*—Calcutta Edn 1904, pp 79 80) It was Gur Das and Arjun Singh that invested the unpretending Nanak with heavenly powers and emanations and proclaimed him the instrument of God for the redemption of the world

The work of Bhai Gur Das is much read by the Sikhs Extracts from it are found in the 3rd appendix to Cunningham's book and in Sir John

Malcolm's *Sketch of the Sikhs* (pp 152 ff) Gur Das's pride and haughtiness are at first said to have displeased his master and the *Guan Ratnali* was at first refused a place in the *Adi Granth Sahib*. It is told that by a miracle the Guru was convinced of the sincerity of his disciple and agreed to include his writings in the *Adi Granth*. But the meekness of Gur Das was such that he himself declared his writings to be unworthy of association with the Granth. Arjun Singh thereupon declared that Gur Das's book was nevertheless to be deemed important and read by all the Sikhs and that Gur Das had become as holy as a Guru himself in a metaphorical sense. The Guru complimented him greatly on his modesty and humility and said that "whosoever might read the Bhai's writings should acquire spiritual profit and faith in the instructions of the holy Gurus." Another version is that the Guru, in order to make a trial of the temper of his scribe, himself offered to insert the latter's book in the *Adi Granth*.

#### THE SPREAD OF THE FAITH

It was Guru Arjun that organised a regular system of taxation and appointed delegates to collect it from the faithful. The collections were presented to the Guru in the annual assembly of the Sikhs. "Thus were the Sikhs accustomed to a regular system of government, and having been formed into a community, gradually developed into a real power" (Syed Mohammad Latif—*History of the Punjab* p 251). Arjun also sent his followers to foreign countries for purposes of trade, principally in Turkistan horses, he kept up a large retinue and a numerous establishment of elephants and horses and lived in great pomp and splendour. "He was the first of the Gurus who laid aside the rosary and the garb of the *faqir* and converted the

saintly *gadi* of his pious predecessors into a princely rostrum" He organised his followers into a political community as well He converted large numbers of men to his own faith, and among others the hill rajas of Kulu, Chuket, Haripur, Chamba and Mandi

The Guru's compilation of the *Granth Sahib* was a very elaborate process First the hymns of the Sikh Gurus were included—the hymns of the first Guru as Mahalla I come first, and those of the next come as Mahalla II and so on After the hymns of Gurus which are arranged according to *rags* or musical measures, the songs of the principal Indian saints, Hindu and Muhammadan, since the days of Jayadeva, author of the lyrical *Gita Govinda* which conformed to the spirit of reform then in vogue and were not wholly at variance with the teachings of the Gurus were next taken Since these hymns of the Indian *Bhagats* and *Fakirs* were taken from those who repeated them to Arjun, many Punjabi words had crept into them, and they retained a Punjabi colouring Lastly a noted minstrel composed a long chapter of hymns in praise of Guru Arjun himself Besides several songs of Sikh bards found also a place in the compilation which was completed in A D 1604 (Samvat 1661) According to Arjun the book was the embodiment of the Gurus themselves and should therefore be held in extreme reverence It was not entrusted to the tribes from whom the Gurus had sprung lest they might become proud from its possession, but was given to the ancient patriarch, Bhai Budha Bhai Banno contrived to get possession of the book for some time and to obtain a full copy of it in which he introduced several hymns of his own selection but Arjun Singh desires that the compilation might remain as he himself had finished it

Arjan Singh made arrangements to have the Sikh faith spread in Kashmir, also, and the Kashmiris were advised "to rise before day, perform their ablutions, repeat and sing the Gurus' hymns, associate with holy men, observe the Gurus' anniversaries, distribute sacred food, give a tithe of their earnings to the Sikh cause, share their food with others, speak civilly, live humbly and adopt the other rules and observances of the Sikhs."

Arjan Singh refused to betroth his son Har Govind to the daughter of Chanda Shah, the Mughal finance minister of the Lahore Subah in the reign of the Emperor Jahangir. The Guru returned the betrothal presents sent by Chanda Shah, on the advice of the Sikhs in Delhi saying in a dubious manner that "an ornamental tile should not be put into a gutter" and that he was contented with his humble lot and desired not any alliance with the great and the powerful. The minister had himself given the Guru cause for offence by calling him a beggar and comparing him to the drain of a house and himself to the top floor. The words of the Guru inflamed him greatly, and he vowed vengeance on the Guru and calumniated him to the Emperor who was then staying at Lahore. The jealous brother of the Guru, Prithia, also joined suit. At that time, Khushru who had rebelled against his father had been helped by the Guru who gave him five thousand rupees to defray his expenses in the course of his flight to Kabul. Chanda, Prithia and even the latter's son Mirban joined together to rouse the ire of the Emperor against the Guru informing him that the Guru had not only helped but blessed Khushru and foretold that he would occupy the throne. The Guru was summoned to the Emperor's presence, and the latter addressed him thus—"Thou art

a saint, a great teacher and a holy man thou lookest on all, rich and poor, alike It was not therefore proper for thee to give money to my enemy Khushru" Arjun Singh boldly replied, "I regard all people whether Hindu or Mussalman, rich or poor, friend or foe, without love or hate, and it is on this account that I gave thy son some money for his journey, and not because he was in opposition to thee If I had not assisted him in his forlorn condition and so shown some regard for the kindness of thy father the Emperor Akbar to myself, all men would despise me for my heartlessness and ingratitude or they would say I was afraid of thee This would have been unworthy of a follower of Guru Nanak, the world's Guru" The Emperor ordered the Guru to pay a fine of two lakhs of rupees and also declared that the hymns in the *Adi Granth* which offended Hindus and Muhammadans should be removed The Guru replied—"Whatever money I have is for the poor, the friendless and the stranger If thou asketh for money thou mayst take what I have but if thou asketh for it by way of fine I shall not give thee even a *hawani*, for a fine is imposed on wordly persons and not on priests and anchorites And as to what thou hast said regarding the erasure of hymns in the *Granth Sahib*, I cannot erase or alter an iota I am a worshipper of the Immortal God, the Supreme Soul of the world There is no monarch, save Him, and what he revealed to the Gurus, from Guru Nanak to Guru Ram Das, and afterwards to myself is written in the holy *Granth Sahib* The hymns which find a place in it are not disrespectful to any Hindu incarnation or any Muhammadan prophet It is certainly stated that prophets, priests and incarnations are the handiwork of the immortal God My main object is the spread of truth and the destruction

of falsehood, and if in pursuance of that object this perishable body must depart, I shall account it a great good fortune" (Macauliffe Vol III pp 91-92)

The Guru was thrown into prison, and it is said that Brahmins and Kazis tortured him in various ways But he would not recant and only said,—

The egg of superstition hath burst, the mind is illumined,  
 The Guru hath cut the fetters off the feet and freed the  
 captive,  
 My transmigration is at an end  
 The load of my Karma is removed, I am freed therefrom  
 From the sea I have reached the shore, the Guru hath  
 done me this favour  
 True is my place, true my seat and truth I have made  
 my special object  
 Truth is the capital, truth the stock-in trade which  
 Nanak hath put into his house

For five days the Guru suffered untold torture at the hands of the vindictive Chandu, who according to tradition even suggested to the Emperor that Arjun should be tied up in the hide like a cow When the hide was brought before him the Guru asked permission to bathe in the river Ravi whither he was taken under a strong escort Angels appeared to him singing his praise and he plunged into the running water and disappeared while reciting with great devotion the *Japji* (June 1606) Arjun had reigned as Guru for 24 years, and a temple dedicated to him stands opposite the Fort of Lahore near the Mausoleum of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, Thus did Guru Arjun fall a victim to the bigotry and inhumanity of a Mughal Emperor His death is a great turning-point in the history of the Sikh nation From this time forth a rooted hatred of the Mussalman power took possession of them and to their religious zeal was added political fanaticism of a bitter kind From the *Dabistan-i-*

*Mazahab (The Mirror of Manners* trans, by Shea and Troyer—Vol II, pp 272 73) we learn that the Sikhs themselves hold conflicting accounts as to the facts of the Guru's end and arraignment, and that all of them attribute his continued imprisonment to Chandu Shah's malignity The *Dabistan* further adds that in the time of Arjun, Sikhs were to be found everywhere in the Punjab

The effects of Arjun's persecution were immediately felt "Arjun was a priest and merchant, his successor Har Govind was a warrior He abandoned the gentle and spiritual teaching of Nanak for the use of arms and the love of adventure He encouraged his followers to eat flesh as giving them strength and daring, he substituted zeal in the cause for saintliness of life as the price of salvation, and he developed the organised discipline which Arjun had initiated

His policy was followed by his two immediate successors and led up to the work of the great Guru Govind Singh" (Sir Denzil Ibbetson's *Census Report of the Punjab 1851*)

#### GURU HAR GOVIND

Guru Arjun Singh left a minor son and successor, Har Govind, who was duly acknowledged and installed as the Guru The new Guru combined in himself the qualities of a saint and a teacher, a warrior and a sportsman He was the first Guru who organised a military system, armed his followers and fully prepared them for fighting He issued an encyclical letter to all the *masands* who used to collect offerings and tithes from the Sikhs that he would be pleased with those who brought offerings of arms and horses, instead of money When the aged Bhai Budha remonstrated with the Guru on seeing him in military harness, the latter replied—"It is in fulfilment of thy blessing that I wear two swords

as emblems of spiritual and temporal authority  
In the Guru's house, religion and worldly enjoyment shall be combined—the cauldron to supply the poor and the needy and the scimitar the smite to oppressors"

The new Guru, while warmly addicted to the chase and the field, was still a great teacher "He rained instruction like clouds in Srawan and the Sikhs flourished under it like thirsty rice fields" He secured the confidence of the Emperor and wreaked his vengeance on his father's persecutor, Chanda Shah, bringing about his death under great torture He surpassed his predecessors in splendour and state, had eight hundred and five horses in his stables and kept up a numerous, gorgeous and well equipped retinue He accompanied the imperial army on its journey to Kashmir He became a commander in the Imperial service, but he soon fell out of the favour of Jahangir and was imprisoned in the fort of Gwalior where state prisoners were usually kept It is said that he remained in Gwalior for 12 years, even there his flock did not desert him He was greatly useful to many of his fellow prisoners whose release he contrived, and he is still remembered in that place as "the holy man who freed the prisoners" Finally the Emperor ordered the release of the Guru and restored him to favour

After Jahangir's death, the Guru entered the service of his son, Shah Jahan The *Guru Bilas* as the traditional account of the life of this Guru is called, gives us many details of the encounters between his forces and the Mughal troops The Guru rose in the estimation of the Emperor's eldest son, Dara Shikoh, who was then keeping his court at Lahore Dara was a very intelligent and inquisitive prince, abstemious in his habits, simple in manners and particularly friendly to

*Fakhs* and holy men He and Har Govind became fast friends and the latter used to spend considerable time at Lahore

Soon the Guru asserted his powers in the numerous encounters that he had to wage with the Mughal army, but he cleverly and bravely surmounted all the difficulties that beset him and gradually began to entertain some degree of confidence in his own power and in the prowess of his followers He established himself at Kartarpur near the hills where he died in 1645 after having been Guru for over 80 years and nominating his grandson, Har Rai, as the next Guru His death was considered as a national calamity, and a great many of his adherents offered to burn themselves on his funeral pile, and two of them, a Rajput and a Jat, actually did so, expiring at the Guru's feet

#### GURU HAR RAI

The new Guru was a quiet man of a contented disposition, very assable in his habits and not very martial in his deportment "The military spirit of the Sikhs which had been fostered so much by the two preceding Gurus, continued to flourish in his time, for although the Guru took particular care not to meddle with politics, circumstances were not wanting under which the Sikhs were compelled to exert their power and energy to strengthen the factious feuds' Thus the Guru reduced to obedience a hill chief, the Raja of Kahlur, and aided Dara Shikoh who had always maintained a close alliance with the Gurus against his brothers Murad and Aurangzib in the struggle for the throne Dara was enabled to keep up the struggle for some time with the help of the Sikh soldiers, but after he was defeated, captured and put to death, Har Rai contrived to make his peace with the new Emperor, Aurangzib.

The Emperor issued orders demanding the presence of Hari Rai at the imperial court, but the Guru fearing treachery, sent his eldest son, Ram Rai, instead. Ram Rai showed an undue anxiety to please the Emperor and not to wound the susceptibilities of Mussalmans, and the Guru indignantly excluded him from the succession, saying "The Guraship is like tigress' milk which can be only contained in a golden cup. Only he who is ready to devote his life thereto is worthy of it. Let Ram Rai not look on my face again. Let him abide with Aurangzib and amass money at his court."

Hari Rai departed his life in 1661 after a rule of over 38 years. Before his death he summoned a great council of the Sikhs and nominated his second son, Har Kishen, who was still a child, enjoining all the Sikhs to consider the boy as his own image and put faith in him. Hari Rai had taught the Sikhs to read the Granth Sahib and not to worship any inanimate object. He taught his followers not to mourn for the dead, nor to deem gods and goddesses the succourers of men, but to place reliance on the immortal God alone. He taught—"Without reverence, devotion is not obtained, and without devotion there is no holiness. Without holiness, how can there be deliverance? And without deliverance the soul shall be subject to further transmigration and shall not be absorbed in God. It is incumbent on the Sikhs to obtain happiness by pondering on the Guru's words. Pilgrimage, sacrifice, fasting and painful austerities are of no avail. The Guru's saint is my Sikh and delighteth in the Guru's hymns."

#### GURU HAR KISHEN

The new boy Guru was only five years old at the time of his installation, but gave promise of a docile spirit and acute intellect. It is said that

he could give instruction to the Sikhs and clear their doubts Ram Rai, the superseded elder brother, proclaimed himself the rightful Guru, and his *mashads* were busy proclaiming his succession and collecting offering for him The dispute was referred to the crafty Aurangzib who was delighted with this opportunity by which he might set the Sikhs at variance with one another and bring about their mutual destruction Har Kishen went over to Delhi and pleased the Emperor and his adviser Raja Jai Singh of Amber with his intelligence and wisdom But soon the Guru was seized with fever and smallpox, and knowing that his end was near, he nominated Tegh Bahadur, the son of Har Govind, who was living in retirement at the village of Bakala on the Bias

#### GURU TEGH BAHADUR (1664 1675)

Tegh Bahadur was the youngest son of Har Govind, and was so named by his father, because the latter divined that his son would be a great hero, powerful to endure the sword (Tegh) Har Govind is also said to have prophesied that Tegh Bahadur would have a more glorious son who would greatly develop the Sikh religion and would destroy the reign of tyranny in Hindustan The guru, when he nominated his grandson Hari Rai to succeed him, solaced his wife, the mother of Tegh Bahadur, with the prophecy that her son should one day be Guru, and that they should show great patience

At his accession Tegh Bahadur had to confront rival factions, especially the faction of the Sodhis who had set up a Guru of their own He ascended the *gadi* with the help of Makhan Shah, an influential Sikh of Delhi, and after great professions of humility and unworthiness Tegh Bahadur lived in great splendour attended by a numerous cavalry and began the building

of a fort at Kartarpur where he had established his court. He went on an extended missionary tour to all parts of Hindustan, to Prayaga, Benares, Patna, Gaya, etc., trying to organise the local Sikh communities and extend the religion. Meanwhile Ram Rai, the disappointed son of Hari Rai, represented to the Emperor that the Guru's designs were detrimental to the state and suggesting that measures should be taken to arrest his ambition. Tegh Bahadur was brought to the capital with his family and lodged with Ram Singh of Amber. The latter interceded on his behalf with the Emperor and assured him that Tegh Bahadur was a peaceful Guru and aspired to no political power. Tegh Bahadur accompanied the Raja in his march to Bengal and took up his residence at Patna where he founded a college for the instruction of his Sikhs. It is said that he even went to Kamrup (Assam) along with the Rajput chief and converted the ruler of that country. It was when the Guru was living at Patna he had a son, the famous Govind Singh, born. It seems a light was seen in the heavens by a pious *fakir* and his disciples on the occasion of the birth of the child. The *fakir* knew that some one, beloved of God, who would at once be a saint and a hero, has been born into the world, he then followed the direction of the light until he arrived at the child's residence in Patna. Even from his earliest years Govind Rai showed signs of martial ardour, he was accustomed to shooting with a pellet bow and organised a company of boys of his own age to practise with him. Tegh Bahadur used to tell the boy that the practice was meritorious, but the time for putting it into effect had not yet arrived. After a long residence at Patna, Tegh Bahadur returned to the Punjab where he settled at Anandpur on the banks of the Sutlej, close

to Kartarpur the chosen residence of his father and a place of great sanctity among the Sikhs In the Punjab, we are told, Tegh Behadur turned into an adventurer in league with a Muhammadan fanatic, by name Adam Hafiz He was finally captured by the Mughal army and brought to Delhi The Guru, before leaving for the Moghal court, is said to have sent for his son Govind Singh, then fifteen years of age, and girded him with the sword of Har Govind, hailing him as the saviour and future Guru of the Sikhs He told the people around him that he was going to die at the hands of Aurangzib and asked that his body should not be left to become a prey to dogs and enjoyed upon his son the necessity and the honour of avenging his death

When the Emperor asked the Guru to recant, the Guru flatly refused saying, "The prophet of Mahlab who originated thy religion was unable to impose one faith on the world, so how canst thou do so?" Aurangzib ordered him to be remanded to prison and to be tortured until he accepted Islam It is said in the Gurumukh chronicles that the Guru foretold the Emperor when he was charged with looking into the Imperial Zenana from the top storey of his residence, "I was not looking at thy private apartments or thy queens I was looking in the direction of the Europeans who are coming from beyond the seas to tear down thy *pardas* and destroy thine empire" Sikh writers assert that these words became the battle cry of their warriors in their assault on the Mutineers of Delhi in 1857, under the leadership of General Nicholson and thus the prophecy of the 9th Guru was literally fulfilled The Guru's faithful follower, Mati Das, first suffered martyrdom, he was then kept in an iron cage and finally executed in the very act of reciting the Jappi It is said

the Guru's head flew into the lap of the faithful Sikh who fled with it in haste to Anandpur while a great storm arose and filled every one's eyes with dust. The body was cremated by his faithful followers. The author of the *Siyai ul Muta karin* states that Aurangzib had the Guru's body cut into pieces and suspended in different parts of the Imperial capital. Guru Govind thus writes of his father's end:

He gave up his head, but uttered not a groan,  
 He suffered martyrdom for the sake of religion,  
 He gave his head, but swerved not from his determination  
 Having broken his potsherd (body) on the head of the  
 King of Delhi he departed to Paradise  
 No one else coming into the world acted like Tegh  
 Bahadur

A great shrine was erected at Anandpur over the head of the martyred Guru while a tomb was erected at the place of cremation of the body which is known to this day as the *Sar Gang*. The Guru Tegh Bahadur was a valorous warrior, manifesting kingly rather than priestly aims and contributing effectively to the conversion for the Sikhs into fanatic warrior and thus he prepared the way for the great Guru Govind Singh. Tegh Bahadur was universally acknowledged among the Sikhs as the *Sacha Badshah* (veritable king) who guided the soul to salvation while a temporal monarch guided merely man's worldly actions. The violent end of his martyred father made a strong impression on the mind of Govind Singh who determined to wreak vengeance on the Muhammadans and to institute a religious and military commonwealth of his community. We shall see how truly and firmly Govind Singh accomplished his objects.

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# GURU GOVIND SINGH

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## THE EARLY YEARS OF HIS GURUSHIP

**G**URU GOVIND, the only son of the martyred Tegh Bahadur succeeded to his father's apostolic *gadi* when he was only fifteen years of age. His rival Ram Rai had now dwindled into the head of a small dissenting sect. But the young Guru was surrounded on all sides by enemies and he retreated for safety to the hills of the Upper Jumna where he occupied himself with chase and archery, with study and reflection. Govind matured his plans for the social and political reform of the community during the period of his retirement in the hills which lasted for nearly 26 years. During this time he acquired a good knowledge of Hindi and Persian and stored his mind well with historical, mythological and legendary lore. His life during his youth and early manhood is described in beautiful verses in the *Vichitra Natak*, from which extracts are given by Malcolm. It was now that he resolved to attempt to abolish all caste distinctions among the Hindus and of "making wordly wealth and eminence objects to which Hindus of every rank and denomination might aspire and of making this equality a fundamental principle of his sect". He used all his eloquence to fire his followers with a sense of his own and their wrongs and to rouse them to revenge their injured honour and manhood and strive continuously to awaken his countrymen to a new and noble life.

As increasing numbers came, Govind Singh formed a regular army and, in order to complete his military equipment, had a big drum constructed. The activities of the youthful Govind Singh were

not, however, free to develop, they aroused the suspicions of the hill Rajahs who now began to treat the Guru with hostility. Govind Rai's own mother and uncle expostulated with him, saying "Our business is with religion for which humility is required." The Guru replied, "Mother dear, how long shall I remain in concealment? I am not going to take forcible possession of the hill Rajahs' territories. If they are jealous for nothing and allow their hearts to rankle, I cannot help it. This is the Guru's castle where men shall obtain their deserts." The hill Rajahs, under the leadership of Rajah Fath Shah of Srinagar made war on Govind Singh, aided by Mahomedan mercenaries. Govind Singh defeated the Rajahs completely, and his followers and countrymen rejoiced greatly. For twenty years from his accession to the Guruship, Govind Singh thus continued his life amidst the secluded valleys of the Sutlej, gathering followers exercising them in arms and discipline, and occasionally fighting and conquering small bits of territory from the unfriendly hill Rajahs.

#### GOVIND'S MARRIAGE

Two years after his installation, a man named Bikhia residing in Lahore went to visit the Guru, and seeing him handsome and well-proportioned, offered him his daughter Jito. The Guru's mother was pleased and the marriage was soon celebrated (1677 A.D.). Some time after another Sikh who had a daughter named Sundari proposed to the Guru to wed her and make her the slave of his feet. The Guru did not desire another wife but it was pressed on him by his mother, and the Guru's nuptials were not long after solemnised. Four sons were born to Govind of whom two died in battle, and the other two, as we shall afterwards see, were cruelly put to death by the Mahomedans in

Sirhind The names of the two sons of Jito were Zorawar Singh and Jujbar Singh, while those of Sundari were Ajit Singh and Falat Singh, these two being the eldest and the last

#### GOVIND SINGH AND HINDU SHASTRAS

It was during this period of his life—a period of study and warlike preparation—that Govind Singh called in a number of bards to translate the Hindu Puranas and the Epics—the Mahabarata and the Ramayana, the stories of Durga, Rama, Krishna and other Hindu Deities. It is also said that Govind celebrated a great sacrifice in honour of Durga, hoping that the goddess would help him in his military pursuits and ambition. This chapter of his life has been criticised by many adversely to Sikhism as indicating a relapse on the part of Guru Govind into idolatrous Hinduism. From what we find in his great and authentic hymns and poems, there is nothing to indicate that Govind Singh was an idolater in any bad sense of the term. He often pours ridicule upon the worship of stones and stocks and meaningless rituals and rites. The proper explanation therefore of this incident of his life is perhaps the one advanced by the learned writer, Macauliffe, in his book on Sikhism. At that time it was the custom to recite on the eve of battle the praises and warlike deeds of the brave, so that the hearts even of cowards might be inspired with eagerness for the fray. On that account the tenth Guru maintained fifty two bards to translate the Mahabharat, the Ramayana, the gallant achievements of Ram, Krishna, Chandi and others. It does not follow from this that the Guru worshipped those whose acts were thus celebrated, this was only done for the purpose of inciting to bravery, dispelling cowardice, and filling the hearts of his troops with valour to defend their

faith This the Guru himself declares in his translation of the tenth canto of the *Bhagavat* in which are recounted the chivalrous exploits of Krishna He says, "I have rendered in the vulgar dialect the tenth chapter of the *Bhagavat* with no other object than to inspire ardour for religious warfare"

#### THE FORMATION OF THE KHALSA

By this time, when the Guru was some thirty years old, Govind Singh had matured his plans of reforming the Sikhs and forming them into a compact and homogeneous people The violent death of his father and the deep sense of the wrongs of his persecuted race of which reports were daily reaching his ears, had long rankled in his mind and he now resolved to put an end to them The time too perhaps suited him, the bigot emperor Aurangazib having commenced a crusade against Hindu and Sikh alike

The Guru invited all his Sikhs to attend the great Baisakhi fair at Anandpur Many were the men to respond they came in crowds and joined him On finding them assembled, the Guru ordered that carpets be spread on a raised mound which he indicated, and that an adjacent spot should be screened off with tent walls When this was done, the Guru ordered a confidential Sikh to go at midnight, tie five goats in the enclosure and let no one know what he had done Next morning, the Guru rose a watch before day, performed his devotions and put on his arms and uniform He then proclaimed that there should be a great open-air gathering When all were seated, he drew his sword, and asked if there was any one of his beloved Sikhs ready to lay down his life for him No reply was given All grew pale on hearing such a proposal The Guru asked a second

time but with the same result. A third time he spoke in a louder voice, "If there be any true Sikh of mine, let him give me his head as an offering and proof of his faith." Daya Singh, a Sikh of Lahore, rose and said, "O true King, my head is at thy service." The Guru took his arm, led him within the enclosure and gave him a sent. He then cut off a goat's head with one stroke of the sword, went forth and showed the dripping weapon to the multitude. The Guru asked again, "Is there any other true Sikh who will bestow his head on me?" The crowd felt not quite convinced that the Guru was in earnest and that he had killed Daya Ram, so no one replied. At the third time of asking, Dharm Das of Delhi answered, "O Great King, take my head." The Guru, assuming an angry mien, took Dharm Das within the enclosure, seated him near Daya Ram and killed another goat. The Guru, then looking very fierce, came forth and said, "Is there any other Sikh who will offer me his head? I am in great need of Sikh's heads." On this some remarked that the Guru had lost his reason, others went to the Guru's mother to complain. When the Guru began to call for the fourth Sikh, the Sikhs thought he was going to kill them all. So some ran away and some hung down their heads. Sabib Chand, a resident of Bidar was the fourth to place himself at the disposal of the Guru. The Guru took him into the tent and killed another goat. The Guru then came out and asked for the head of another Sikh. On this many ran away. Himmat of Jagannath was the fifth to offer himself. The Guru took him inside the tent and killed the remaining goat.

The Guru was now ready to sacrifice his own life for the five Sikhs who showed such devotion to him. He clad them in splendid raiment, so that they shone like the sun, and thus addressed

them, "My brethren, you are in my form, and I am in yours He who thinketh there is any difference between us erreth exceedingly" Then seating the five Sikhs near him, he addressed the assembly, "In the time of Guru Nanak, there was found one devout Sikh, namely Guru Angad In my time there are found five Sikhs totally devoted to the Guru These shall lay anew the foundation of Sikhism, and the true religion shall become current and famous throughout the world" The people became astonished at the Guru's expedient, and fell at the feet of the devoted Sikhs, saying "Hail to the Sikh religion! You, brethren, have established it on a permanent basis Had we offered our heads like you, we too should be blest" The Guru again addressed the Sikhs "Since the time of Baba Nanak, *charanpahul* hath been customary Men drank the water in which the Gurus had washed their feet, a custom which led to great humility, but the Khalsa can now only be maintained as a nation by bravery and skill in arms Therefore I now institute the custom of baptism by water stirred with a dagger and change my followers from Sikhs to *Singhs* or Lions They who accept the nectar of the *pahul* shall be changed before your very eyes from jackals into lions and shall obtain empire in this world and bliss hereafter"

According to the Persian historian Ghulam Muhiul Din, the newswriter of the day sent the Emperor a copy of the Guru's address to the Sikhs on this occasion It is dated the first of Baisakh, Samvat 1756 (1699 A D) and runs as follows

Let all embrace one creed and obliterate differences of religion Let the four Hindu castes who have different rules for their guidance abandon them all, adopt the one form of adoration, and become brothers Let no one deem himself superior to another Let no one pay heed to the Ganges and other places of pilgrimage which are spoken of with reverence in the

"Shastras or adore incarnations such as Ram Krishna Brahma and Durga, but believe in Guru Nanak and other Sikh Gurus Let men of the four castes receive my baptism eat out of one dish, and feel no disgust or contempt for one another "

The newswriter, while forwarding the report, thus makes his own comment thereon

When the Guru had thus addressed the crowd several Brahmins and Khatris stood up and said that they accepted the religion of Guru Nanak and the other Gurus Others on the contrary said that they would never accept any religion which was opposed to the teaching of the Vedas and the Shastras and that they would not renounce at the bidding of a boy the ancient faith which had descended to them from their ancestors Thus though several refused to accept the Guru's religion about twenty thou and men stood up and promised to obey him, as they had the fullest faith in his divine mission

The Guru caused his five faithful Sikhs to stand up He put pure water into an iron vessel and stirred it with a *khanda* or two edged sword He then repeated over it the sacred verses which he had appointed for the ceremony viz., the Japji, Guru Amar Das's Anand and certain Sawaijas (which will be found in a latter part of this sketch) or quatrains of his own composition While this was being done, Mata Jito wife of Gorind, passed by carrying some sweetsments Gorind Singh said that she had come at an opportune moment and asked her to throw the sweets into the holy water He had begun he said to beget the Khalsa (this word coming from the Arabic *khabs* meaning 'pure' and was applied by Guru Gorind to the Sikhs who accepted the baptism, of the sword), and without a woman, no son could be produced Now that the sweets were poured into the nectar, the Sikhs would be at peace with one another, otherwise they would be at continual variance The five Sikhs, fully dressed and accoutred stood up before the Guru He told them to repeat 'Wah Guru' and the preamble of the Japji He then gave five palmsfuls of the amrit to drink He sprinkled it

five times on their hair and their eyes and told them to repeat 'Wah Guru jiha Khalsa, Wah Guru jihi Matah' On this he gave them the appellation of Sikhs or Lions He then explained to them what they might or might not do They must always wear the following articles, whose names begin with a *K* viz, *Kes*—long hair, *Kangha*—a comb, *Kripaṇ*—a sword, *Kacch*—short drawers, *Kara*—a steel bracelet They were enjoined to practise arms and never to show their backs to the foe in battle They were ever to help the poor and protect those who sought their protection They must not look with lust on another's wife or commit fornication, but ever adhere to their wedded spouses They were to consider their previous castes erased and deem themselves all brothers of one family They were freely to intermarry with one another but must have no social or matrimonial relations with smokers, with persons who killed their daughters, with the descendants or the followers of Pietha Chand, etc, and the *mashnads* who had fallen away from the tenets of Guru Nanak They must not worship idols, cemeteries or cremation grounds They must believe only in the Immortal God They must rise at dawn, bathe, read the prescribed hymns of the Gurus, meditate on the Creator, abstain from the flesh of an animal whose throat had been cruelly jagged with a knife in the Mahomedan fashion, and be loyal to their masters

When the Guru had thus administered baptism to his five tried Sikhs, he stood up before them with clasped hands and begged them to administer baptism to himself In the same way as he had administered to them They were astonished at such a proposal, and represented their own unworthiness and the greatness of the Guru They asked why he made such a request and why he stood in a suppliant posture before them.

He replied, "I am the son of the Immortal God It is by His order that I have been born and have established this form of baptism They who accept it shall henceforth be known as the Khalsa There is no difference between you and me As Guru Nanak seated Guru Angad on the throne, so have I made you also Gurus Wherefore, administer the baptism nectar to me also without any hesitation' Accordingly the five Sikhs baptised the Guru with the same ceremonies and injunctions he himself had emp'oved He thus invested his sect with the dignity of Gurudom

The Guru called the five Sikhs his *Panch Piyare* or the Five Friends, and styled himself and the rest who had been baptised Singhs so that his own name Govind Rai was changed into Govind Singh (a name which we have already anticipated in the sketch)

Many others assembled followed suit and prepared to receive baptism Govind Singh next issued a supplementary ordinance that if any Sikh cut his hair, smoked tobacco or associated with a Mahomedan woman or ate flesh of a certain kind he must be re-baptised pay a fine and promise not to offend any more otherwise he must be held to be excommunicated from the Khalsa The place where the historic meeting took place is now known as Kesigarth

#### THE NEW ARMY AND ITS CHARACTER

Govind Singh's next move was to issue orders that every Sikh house inhabited by four adult males should contribute two for service under him In a short time, 80,000 were gathered round him In addressing them he commenced by praising God as the Almighty the Omnipotent, Invincible and Merciful who must be worshipped in truthfulness and in sincerity He could only be beheld by the eye of faith in the

general body of the Khalsa All Sikhs must live like brothers A number of these remarkable addresses of Govind Singh to his followers given on the battle field or in the camp or in the general meetings which were held on stated occasions or when large numbers of Sikhs came to be baptised, are preserved in the Sikh chronicles and attest his eloquence, his strength of mind and ideal and the perseverance with which he ever kept the Sikhs in memory of the great ideals he had dedicated himself to work for

O Sikhs, borrow not, but, if you are compelled to borrow, faithfully restore the debt Speak not falsely and associate not with the untruthful Practise truth, clasp truth to your hearts Live by honest labour and deceive no one Let not a Sikh be covetous Repeat the Japji before eating Look not on a naked woman Act according to the *Granth Sahib* Cling to the boat in which thou hast embarked Wander not in search of another religion Marry only into the house of a Sikh Preserve thy wife and children from evil company Eat regardless of caste with all Sikhs who have been baptised

Habitually attend a Sikh temple and eat a little sacred food therefrom Let a Sikh contribute a tenth part of his earnings for religious purposes Let him bow down at the conclusion of prayer When a Sikh dieth, let sacred food be prepared, and after his cremation, let the *sohila* be read and prayer offered Let not there be much mourning On such occasions let the Guru's hymns be read and sung

Worship not an idol and drink not the water in which it hath been bathed

My face is turned towards him who calleth out to a Sikh, 'Wah Guru jiki fatah, my right shoulder towards him who returneth the salutation with love, my left shoulder to him who returneth it as a matter of custom, and my back towards him who returneth not at all To him who abideth by these rules, I will grant a position to which no one hath yet been able to attain, and which was beyond the conception of Shankaracharya, Dattatreya, Ramanuja, Gorakh and Mahommad' "As when rain falleth on the earth, the fields yield excellent and pleasant fruit, so he who listeneth to the Guru and attendeth to all his instructions shall assuredly receive the reward thereof"

Let those who are baptized according to my rites bear arms and live according to their means Let them remain true to their sovereign in the battlefield and never turn their backs to the foe

Let not any Sikh of mine worship Hindu and Mahomedan cemeteries or give alms to one who weareth any religious garb He who feedeth the traveller who giveth alms on the occasion of the Gurus anniversaries and who hath faith in the Guru, shall hereafter go to the Gurus' abode Let my Sikhs abide apart, and be ever full of thoughts of God

He who giveth his daughter to a Sikh and taketh no money is a Sikh of mine

Let Sikh men and women sit together and hold divine discourse Let them worship God themselves and teach their children to do so

Let him who calleth himself a true Sikh of mine accept baptism and do good acts Let him renounce the service of demons and spirits and the worship of stones and false gods

#### On another occasion

O Sikhs, act as follows—Clothe and feed your brother Sikhs, as far as your means allow, shampoo them, bathe them, wash their clothes fan them when they perspire, draw them cool watar from the well and cook them food

Let them night and day do similar offices unto each other, commit to memory the Guru's hymns and repeat the true Name

On seeing any person in trouble, take compassion on him and remove his sufferings to the best of your ability Then the Primal Supreme Being will be merciful unto you

Wear not dirty clothes, associate not with thieves adulterers, gamblers, etc Remember the sinner is worse than the sin, for he is the cause thereof

Bathe in holy Amritsar Behold the God's temple where the Guru's words are ever repeated Sit down therein respectfully and allow your minds to think of nothing but God Ever look with devotion on where His Light is resplendent If he who deemeth himself a Sikh behold not Amritsar, why did he take birth in the world? Unprofitable is his advent and he shall afterwards regret his negligence

Govind Singh thus appealed to the eternal instincts of equality, liberty and brotherhood, broke for ever the cast prejudices and received

into the Khalsa people of all classes who had hitherto been debarred from bearing arms and participating in religion. The Singhs of the Khalsa should have felt themselves at once elevated and equal to the proud and martial Rajput. Personal pride and strength were infused into them, and Sikhism knitted them together into one common brotherhood, animated by a common faith, one social life and national longing.

The effect of these new teachings, it is said, was immediate and profound. The Sikhs began to manifest great chivalry and courage and live in sweet social love and harmony among themselves. Wherever there was oppression or cruelty, the Sikhs were there and with ready heart and brave arms, helped the persecuted. Among themselves they lived like brothers, they used to feed one another, shampoo one another when tired, bathe one another, wore one another's clothes, and one Sikh always met another with a smile on his face and love in his heart. Their devotion to their religion and the Guru also grew, and morning and evening they could be seen in the camp or their village homes devoutly repeating the Japji and the Sohila and the hymns of the Gurus.

#### STRUGGLES WITH THE MAHOMMEDAN EMPEROR

The increasing power of Govind Singh and his nation, the new courage and faith he had infused into them, filled the neighbouring hill Rajahs with fear and even roused the suspicions of the Delhi Government. An army was therefore sent under Sayid Khan to subdue Govind Singh; Sayid Khan however seems to have betrayed his command and joined Guru Govind. A second time, another army was sent under Wazir Khan with strict orders to capture Anandpur and

destroy Govind Singh's forces Wazir Khan's army advanced and soon laid siege to Anandpur Hill chiefs too came and joined the Mahomedan general with their army The siege was long and protracted Govind Singh defended the city with great courage and heroism But brave and valiant as they were, they were face to face with a highly equipped and more numerous army, at last Govind Singh and his few surviving followers were forced to evacuate the city Govind Singh marched south by way of Kirtapur, while his mother and his two children (the other two had already fallen in the battle) went to Sirhind where they took refuge in a Brahman's house The treacherous Brahman robbed the mother of the wealth she was carrying, and, more horrible still, betrayed their arrival to the local Mahomedan governor The tragic story of the children's death is well known, how the two heroic youths were asked on the penalty of death, to embrace the Mahomedan faith, how they nobly refused to fall away from the faith of their father and their Gurus, how they were at last cruelly buried alive under a wall

#### GOVIND SINGH'S LETTER TO AURANGAZIB

The news of the tragic fate of his children reached Govind Singh while he was staying at a village called Jatpura, fifty miles from Sirsaad It is said that the Guru on hearing the narrative, dug up a shrub growing by with his knife and uttered, "As I dig up this shrub by the roots, so shall the Turks be extirpated" The Guru next went to Dina and it was here, where his stay appears to have been somewhat protracted, that he wrote his celebrated Persian epistle to Aurangazib in reply to an invitation from the Emperor to come and see the latter The evidence as to whether the letter reached Aurangazib or how he received it is meagre, but,

as it is, nothing can excel the remarkable strength and courage, and the noble indignation, it reveals. Withal it is instinct with a great religious and moral fervour In it are combined the righteous indignation of the saint as well as the woes of the patriot We give the letter below It is styled *Zafa Nama* —

I have no faith in thine oath to which thou tookest the One God as witness I have not a particle of confidence in thee Thy treasurer and thy ministers are all false

As to my defeat at Chamkaur, what could forty men do when a hundred thousand came on them unawares ?

The oath breakers attacked them abruptly with swords, arrows and muskets I was forced to engage in the combat and I fought to the utmost of my ability When an affair passeth beyond the region of diplomacy, it is lawful to have recourse to the sword

Did I not know that thou, O faithless man, wert a worshipper of wealth and perjurer ? Thou keepest no faith and observest no religion Thou knowest not God, and believest not in Mohammed He who hath regard for his religion never swerveth from his promise Thou hast no idea of what an oath on the Quran is, and cans't have no belief in Divine Providence

When thou didst swear by Mohammed and called the word of God to witness, it was incumbent on thee to observe that oath Were the Prophet himself present here, I would make it my special object to inform him of the treachery

If thou hast spoken truly, then come to me If thou come to the village of Kangar, we shall have an interview Thou shalt not run the slightest danger on the way, for the whole tribe of Bairars are under me

I am a slave and servant of the King of Kings and ready to obey His order with my life Should His orders reach me, I will go to thee with all my heart If thou have any belief in God, delay not in this matter *It is thy duty to know God He never ordered thee to annoy others* Thou art seated on an emperor's throne, yet how strange are thy justice thine attributes and thy regard for religion ! Alas ! a hundred times alas ! for thy sovereignty ! Strange, strange is thy decree ! Promises not intended to be fulfilled injure those who make them Smite not any one mercilessly with the sword, or a sword from on high shall smite thyself O man, be not reckless, fear God He cannot be flattered or praised The King of Kings is without fear He is the true Emperor of earth and heaven God is the master of both worlds He is the creator of all animals from

the feeble and to the strong elephant He is the Protector of the miserable and Destroyer of the reckless His name is the support of the unhappy, It is He who showeth man the way he ought to go Thou art bound by the oath on the Quran Bring the matter to a good issue according to thy promises It is incumbent on thee to act wisely and be discreet in all thy actions What though my four sons were killed I remain behind like a coiled snake What bravery is it to quench a few sparks of life? Thou art merely exciting a raging fire the more How well spake the sweet tongued Firdausi 'Haste is the devil's work' I would have gone many times to thee, had thy promise been kept when the bullocks were plundered As thou didst forget thy word on that day so will God forget thee God will award thee the fruit of the evil deed thou didst design It is good to act according to thy religion and to know that God is dearer than life I do not deem thou knowest God since thou hast done acts of oppression Wherefore the great God knoweth thee not and will not receive thee with all thy wealth I will not enter thy presence nor travel on the same road with thee, but if God so will it, I will proceed towards thee

Fortunate art thou, Aurangazib King of Kings expert swordsman and rider Handsome is thy person and thou art intelligent Thou art generous to thy co-religionists and prompt to crush thine enemies Thy generosity is profuse and in battle thou art firm as a mountain. Thou art monarch of the world, but far from thee is religion

I wanted to kill the hillmen who were full of strife They worshipped idols and I was an idol breaker Behold the power of the good and pure God who by means of one man killed hundreds of thousands What can an enemy do when God the friend is kind? His function it is, as the great Bestower, to bestow He giveth deliverance and pointeth out the way to His creatures He teacheth the tongue to utter his praises in the hour of action He blindeth the enemy He rescueth the helpless and protecteth them from injury The Merciful showeth mercy to him who acteth honestly God bestoweth peace on him who heartily performeth His service How can an enemy lead astray him with whom the Guide of the way is well pleased? Should tens of thousands proceed against such a person, the Creator will be his guardian When thou lookest to thine arms and wealth, I look to God's praises Thou art proud of thine empire, while I am proud of the kingdom of the Immortal God Be not heedless this caravanserai is only for a few days People leave it all times Behold the revolution which passeth over every denizen and house in this faithless world Even though thou art strong, annoy not the weak Lay not the axe to thy kingdom, When God is a friend, what can an enemy do even though he multiply himself a hundred times?



shineth in you Wherefore always abide in cheerfulness, never give away to mourning For the love of creatures the Guru assumed birth Be hath instructed them in the True Name O Khalsa, ever remember the true name The Guru hath arrayed you in arms to procure you the sovereignty of the earth Those who have died in battle have gone to the abode of bliss I have attached you to the skirt of the Immortal God and entrusted you to Him Read the Granth Sahib or listen to it, so shall your minds receive consolation

Again he said —

I have entrusted you to the immortal God Ever remain under His protection, trust no one besides Wherever there are five Sikhs assembled who abide by the Guru's teachings, know that I am in the midst of them I have infused my soul into the Khalsa and the Granth Sahib

He then bathed and putting on new clothes said —

Wah Guru jiki Khalsa Wah Guru jiki Fatah O beloved Khalsa let him who desireth to behold me, behold the Guru Granth Obe the Granth Sahib It is the visible body of the Guru And let him who desireth to meet me diligently searne its hymns

Few lives, in or outside India, of saint or national leader, have had a more noble close

#### SOME ESTIMATES OF GURU GOVIND'S WORK AND CHARACTER

Says Cunningham —

It was reserved for Nanak to perceive the true principles of reform, and to lay the broad foundations which enabled his successor Govind Singh to fire the minds of his countrymen with a new nationality and to give practical effect to the doctrine that the lowest is equal with the highest, in race as in creed, in political rights as in religious hopes In the heart of a powerful empire, he (Govind Singh) set himself to the task of subverting it, and from the midst of social degradation and religious corruption, he called up simplicity of manners, singleness of purpose and enthusiasm of desire

In another place, the same historian observes —

Success is not always the measure of greatness The last Apostle of the Sikhs did not live to see his two ends accomplished, but he effectually roused the dormant energies of a vanquished people, and filled them with a lofty although fitful longing for social freedom and national ascendancy, the proper adjuncts of that purity of worship which had been preached by

Nanak, Govind Singh saw what was yet vital, and he revived it with Promethean fire. A living spirit possesses the whole Sikh people, and the impress of Guru Govind Singh has not only elevated and altered the constitution of their minds, but has operated materially and given amplitude to their physical frames. In religious faith and worldly aspirations, they are wholly different from other Indians, and they are bound together by a community of inward sentiments and outward objects unknown elsewhere.

In a short history of the Sikhs written by Mr Payne, we find —

Like Nanak, Govind Singh attached the utmost importance to purity of life, but on a level with it he placed brave deeds and devotion to the Sikh cause.

The same writer observes elsewhere,

The martial spirit is the life of the Khalsa. As a man of peace, a Sikh is apt to allow his religious fervour to cool, but at the first sound of the call to arms, the spirit of Govind Singh stirs him anew and he straightaway returns, sword in hand, to the paths of orthodoxy.

We shall quote at the end the interesting tribute paid to Govind Singh by Latif in his History of the Punjab. He writes —

Awakening his countrymen to a new and noble life, and rousing their latent energies to a sense of common duty, he blended the undaunted courage of the soldier with the enthusiasm of the devotee, and inspired the peaceful ploughmen with ideas of military glory. In him were united the qualities of a religious leader and a warrior. He was a law-giver in the pulpit, a champion in the field, a king on his māsnad, and a faqir in the society of the Khalees.

#### GOVIND SINGH'S POETIC WORKS AND RELIGIOUS ATTITUDE

Govind Singh has left a number of works, some of them, the poems and hymns, being his own composition, and the others, the work of the fifty-two bards he employed, consisting chiefly of translations from the Hindu epics and Puranas. These were collected together into a single work, called *Govind Singh's Granth* or the *Granth* of Govind Singh, and form an object of devoted study and worship among the Sikhs, next to the older *Granth* of Nanak and his

immediate successors. The original works in this collection consist of a number of poems, hymns and prayers and the autobiography of the Guru called the *Vichitra Natak*. These works fully embody the religion and teachings of the tenth Guru and also his great national and warlike ideals. In spite of the eager note of warlike ambition and secular glory one often meets with in these poems, they are not without a strong mysticism and faith of their own and discover a great and beautiful conception of Godhead and of true religion.

We shall first quote from the *Vichitra Natak* some noble pages in which Govind Singh describes his mission and life ideal. They lie together in the book with much common verse dealing with the worldly doings and history of the Guru but otherwise those poems are remarkable in many ways. They are full of a deep religious passion and spiritual insight. The legend of how the several avatars and saints sent by the Supreme Being to redeem the world became absorbed in his own glory and praise is pregnant with striking poetry and imagination. But though thus full of noble religion and poetry, the verses are not untainted with something of the spirit of the very superstitions which they condemn.

I shall now tell my own history,  
How God brought me into the world as I was performing  
penance,

\* \* \* \*

God remonstrated earnestly with me  
And sent me into this world with the following orders—  
“When I created this world  
I first made the demons who became enemies and  
    oppressors  
They became intoxicated with the strength of their arms  
And ceased to worship me the Supreme Being  
I became angry and at once destroyed them—  
In their places, I established the gods.”

They also busied themselves with receiving sacrifices and worship

And called themselves supreme beings,  
Mahadev called himself the unperishable God  
Vishnu too declared himself to be God,  
Brahm called himself the Supreme Brahm,  
And nobody thought me to be God

\* \* \* \*

They who did not recognise the Primal Essence,  
Worshipped them as God,  
How many worshipped the sun and moon !  
How many made burnt offerings, how many worshipped the Wind !

Some recognised a stone as God,  
How many bathed in the water, according to shastraic rites !

\* \* \* \*

*They whom I appointed to watch over creatures  
On coming into this world called themselves God  
They altogether forgot My orders,  
And became absorbed each in his own praise  
Then I created men,  
They too fell under the influence of pride,  
And made gods out of stones  
Then I created the Sidhs and the Sadhs,  
But they too found not the Supreme Being,  
Whoever was clever in the world  
Established his own Sect  
And no one found the Creator,  
Enmity, contention and pride increased,  
Men began to burn trunk and leaves in their own fire\**  
*And none of them went My way*

\* \* \* \*

They who follow true religion  
Shall have their sins of various kinds blotted out  
They who endure bodily suffering  
And cease not to love Me  
Shall all go to Paradise,  
And there shall be no difference between Me and them

\* \* \* \*

I have cherished thee as My son  
And created thee to extend My religion

(\*Means "Big and little perished by their own contentions")

Go and spread My religion there,  
And restrain the world from senseless acts

\*

On this account God sent me  
Then I took birth and came into the world  
As He spoke to me so I speak unto men,  
I bear no enmity to any one  
All who call me the Supreme Being  
Shall fall into the pit of hell  
Recognise me as God's servant only  
Have no doubt whatever of this  
I am the slave of the Supreme Being  
And have come to behold the wonders of the world  
I tell the world that God told me  
*And I will not remain silent though I fear mortal*

\*

As God spoke to me, I speak.  
I pay no regard 'o any one beside  
I am satisfied with no religious garb  
I sow the seed of the Invisible  
I am not a worshipper of stones  
Nor am I satisfied with any religious garb  
I will sing the name of the Infinite,  
And obtain the Supreme Being  
I will not wear matted hair on my head  
Nor will I put on ear rings  
I will pay regard to no one but God,  
What God told me I will do

I am imbued with Thy Name, O God!  
I am not intoxicated with any other honour  
I am enamoured of Thy form  
No other gift hath charms for me  
I will repeat Thy Name  
And avoid endless sorrow  
Sorrow and sin have not approached those  
Who have meditated on Thy Name  
They who meditated on any one else,  
Shall die of arguments and contentions  
The Divine Guru sent me for religion's sake  
On this account I have come into the world—  
"Extend the faith everywhere  
Sieze and destroy the evil and the sinful!"

Then follows a description of Govind Singh's birth and doings, his battles and victories The poem thus concludes —

What can a miserable enemy do to him whom the Friend  
preserveth  
He cannot even touch his shadow the fool shall pass away  
All—death saaveth all his saints  
He hath tortured and destroyed all sinners,  
He hath shown wonderful things to His saints,  
And saved them from all misery  
Knowing me to be His slave, He hath aided me,  
He hath given me His hand and saved me "

In the *Chaupai* and the introductory verses to the Puranas, we have Govind Singh's conception of the Divinity As far as we can see, they alone, among all his poems, contain the nearest approach to any religious or philosophic theory of Godhead and soul The theory is clearly theistic God is immanent in all creatures "The Primal Light which is called the One God, He at last infused into all His creatures" Though immanent in all, He yet transcends all and thus becomes an object of adoration and love

The one God is contained in all things  
But He established them all separately  
And He pervadeth them all unseen  
He hath given to all men their several entanglements  
He is separate from them and none of them hath found him

\* \* \*

"O God, thou dwellest apart from everything "

This was the theism that was current throughout North India in various forms, Vaishnavite and protestant, and, in spite of apparent differences of worship and mythology, was as much the religion of Vallabha as of Chaitanya, of the Maratha poets as of the Sikh Gurus

O God, give me Thy hand and protect me,  
And all my desires shall be fulfilled,  
May my heart be ever attached to thy feet !

Deem me Thine own and cherish me,  
 Destroy all mine enemies  
 O Creator, may my family and all my servants and disciples  
 live in peace!

May the thirst for repeating Thy  
 name abide with me!  
 And may I not forsaking Thee,  
 meditate on any one besides!

Be Thou always on my side!  
 O Thou with the sword on Thy  
 banner, protect me  
 Preserve me O Thou Preserver  
 Beloved Lord, Protector of the saints  
 Friend of the poor, De trover of the tyrants

My obeisance to Hir alone  
 Who himself adorneth all His subjects,  
 Who bestoweth divine attributes and happiness on His  
 servants,  
 Who destroyeth their enemies in a moment,  
 Who knoweth what is within every heart  
 And the sufferings of the good and the bad

He knoweth every one's suffering,  
 And every secret of man's heart  
 When the Creator projected Himself,  
 His creatures assumed endless shapes  
 Whenever thou drewest creation within Thyself O Lord,  
 All embodied beings are absorbed in Thee,  
 All creatures endowed with speech  
 Speak of Thee according to their understanding —  
 Thou dwellest apart from everything

Men according to their different understandings  
 Give different descriptions of Thee, O God  
 Thine extension cannot be conceived  
 Nor how thou didst first fashion creation  
 Thou hast but one form and that form is incomparable

O God, protect me now,  
Save those who are my disciples,  
And destroy those who are not.

(From the Chaupai )

Like the other great mystics and preachers of this epoch, Govind Singh insisted on purity and love of God as the truest mode of worship. Some of his poems quoted below condemning superstition and idolatry have the force and naivete of Kabir's. The poem quoted first is remarkable for the prayer occurring at the end for a mighty victory". Though religious and mystic in disposition, Govind Singh is at heart a born warrior.

"What availeth it if a crane sit closing his eyes and displaying a religious garb to the world ?  
If man ever go about bathing in water like a fish, how shall he obtain possession of God ?  
If man croak day and night like a frog, and fly like a bird, how shall he obtain possession of God ?  
Siam and all these saints say hath anyone without Love pleased God ?

Of those who through greed of wealth continued to loudly sing and recite God's praises,  
And who danced but gave not their hearts thereto  
Hath any one found the way to God's wonderful world ?

They excited laughter in the world and knew not the essence of wisdom even in their dreams  
The poet Siam asketh, if God hath been obtained by any one without love ?

Several meditated in the forest, and returned home weary  
Sikhs in meditation and munis in deep research have sought for God but found Him not

Hearken, O saints, the poet speaketh, they who search with love obtain God

I am the sun of a brave man, not of a Brahmin how can I perform austerities ?

How can I turn my attention to Thee, O Lord, and forsake domestic affairs ?

Now be pleased to grant me the boon I crave with clasped hands ?

*That when the end of my life cometh, I may die fighting in a mighty battle—*

What availeth it that men perform prostrations of different kinds to God ? They are like wrestlers practising the exercise of dand  
 What availeth it that man lie with their faces turned up ? If they do not heartily bow to the supreme God, they are only as sick men  
 If for ages thou do penance to a stone, it will never rejoice thee  
 O fool, it will never generously lift its arm to requite thee  
 Sav what confidence can be placed in it ? When trouble ariseth it will not come to save thee  
 O man, practise *jog* in this way—  
 Make truth thy horn, sincerity thy necklace, and apply meditation as ashes to thy body  
 Make restraint of thy heart thy ivre, and the support of the Name thine alms  
 Play the Primal essence as thy strings, and thou shalt hear God's sweet song  
 By the practice of the songs of divine knowledge, waves of melody and exquisite pleasure shall be produced  
 Admonish thy heart, don the garb of self restraint and utter God's name inaudibly  
 So shall thy body ever remain like gold and death never approach thee ”

The following poems deal with the cardinal doctrine of equality of men, to which Govind Singh's achievements gave a wide national scope and meaning —

The temple and the Mosque are the same the Hindu worship and the Mussalman prayer are the same all men are the same it is through error they appear different  
 All men have the same eyes and same ears the same body, the same habits,—a compound of earth, air, fire and water  
 Allah and Abhekh are the same the Purans and the Koran are the same, they are all alike It is the One God who created all  
 As from one fire millions of sparks arise though rising separately they unite again in the fire  
 As in one stream millions of waves are produced the waves being made of water all become water  
 So from God's form, non sentient and sentient things are manifested, and, springing from Him, shall all be united in Him again

In perfect unison with the new addition he had made to the old Sihli teaching and faith—the linking of bravery and patriotism with purity of life and devotion to God—the linking of the devotion to God with devotion to the sword—he composed a new Jap or national prayer, which is still sung along with Nanak's and is held in equal veneration. New names are herein given to the Supreme Being who is figured as the Lord of the sword and the Lord of death.

The tenth Guru spoke with holy mouth—  
 God hath no chali or marks, no colour, no caste, no lineage,  
 No form, no complexion, no outline, no costume, none can in any way describe him  
 He is accounted King of Kings, Lord of millions of Indras,  
 He is Sovereign of the three worlds, demi gods, men and demons the woods and dales declare Him indescribable  
 O Lord who can tell thy Names ?  
 The wise call Thee special names according to Thy deeds

## (AKAL USTAR)

May we have the protection of the Immortal Being !  
 May we have the protection of all Steel !  
 May we have the protection of All Death '  
 May we have the protection of All Steel !

We may quote at the end the sawaiyas said to have been composed by Govind Singh

God is true eternal, true to his promise, He is from the beginning without beginning, unfathomable and invincible  
 Bounty, mercy, self control, austerities, daily ceremonies, continence, fasting, clemency, religious observances—all are contained in the name of the Immutable One  
 He is, from the beginning, pure, without a beginning, infinite, endless, without enmity, without fear  
 He hath form and is without form or outline / He groweth not old He is compassionate and merciful to his paor

O True and Eternal One perpetual is Thy dominion,  
 it is Thou who madest the *Vedas* and the *Quran*  
 Thou didst appoint demi gods, demons, the Sesha  
 serpent the past and the present  
 From the beginning before the ages, the stainless, the  
 Indestructible, *Thy Light is seen, though Thou art*  
*unseen*  
 O foolish man, Who hath come to tell thee of the  
 Invisible God?

The *Vedas*, the *Puranas*, the *Quran*, all have grown  
 weary singing Thy praises, O God, but Thou art  
 not known unto them  
 Thou knowest all hearts on earth, in heaven, in the  
 nether regions and in every direction  
*Thy praises fill the earth they entering my heart told*  
*me this—*

\* \* \*

Some worship Brahma as God, others point to Shiv  
 as God  
 Some say that Vishnu is the Lord of the world, and  
 that by worshipping him all sins are erased  
 Think on this a thousand times, O fool, at the last  
 hour all the gods will forsake thee  
 Meditate on Him in thy heart who was, is and ever  
 shall be

# SWAMI VIRAJANAND SARASWATI

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## INTRODUCTORY

**S**WAMI Virajanand Saraswati was one of the greatest devotees of all times. His whole life was one of incessant toil and struggle against the adverse currents of misfortune so common in this topsyturvy world of ours. Without a Virajanand there could have been no Dayanand and without a Dayanand there could have been no revival of *Vedic Dharma* which is so essential for our individual or national salvation. In this country mighty currents of thought of the merciful Buddha, of the scholarly Shankar, of the devout Chaitanya flow, but there are, beside these, beautiful fountains erected by the piety of Tokaram or Ramadasa, by the fervour of Nanak and Kabir, by the zeal of a Ramakrishna or a Virajanand to which a weary traveller can repair and drink deep to his entire spiritual consolation. But ere we reach these fountains, we are to tread on the paths of *Karma* and *Jnana*—action and wisdom—and one such path is chalked out for us by the untiring genius of Swami Virajanand. As far as the work of the resuscitation of the study of classical Sanskrit is concerned, Virajanand's contribution has been undeniably great, and if ever the history of Hindu Protestantism comes to be written, prominence will have to be given, whether we will it or not, to Swami Dayanand but when we think of Dayanand we cannot but think of Swami Virajanand, his great and worthy *Guru*. When the news of the demise of Virajanand reached Dayanand, he took a deep sigh and exclaimed "Alas! *Bharat varsha!* Holy *Arya Varta*, to day the glorious sun

of Vedic grammar, has set"! How the fierce rays of that sun pierced through darkness and laid open all the hidden treasures of *Veda Vidya* can only be realised by those men who have wiped the dust of prejudice from their eyes The incidents in the life, therefore, of this stainless saint are not without special significance to every lover of Sanskrit Literature and Arya Dharma The life has its own grand lessons to teach and unique ideals to present Again, the romantic career of that *Sannyasin* is surrounded by a halo of sanctity, unparalleled in the annals of this country His work is of far-reaching consequences The seeds of activity sown by him in the heart of Dayanand were and are bound to develop themselves into mighty trees yielding delicious fruits to be eaten probably by people coming generations after To day we see only the plants at this stage of transition their growth necessarily seems to be slow But plants of slow growth live long, because they take deep roots The life of this first planter, we repeat, though simple and to all intents and purposes uneventful, is yet interesting enough and deserves a critical study

#### EARLY LIFE FULL OF PATHOS

In the land of the five rivers, on the banks of the river Beas is situated a village Gangapur by name where to one Narayan Datt was born in the Vikrama Samat 1854 a lad who in after years held the key to the scientific study of the *Vedas* and passed it on to a zealous disciple of his Shriman Narayan Dutt was a Saraswata Brahmin and with a view to make his son a great Sanskrit Pandit taught him in due course that Deva-vani, In spite of the tender affection bestowed by the parents on the lad and their attempts to make his life a happy one, a sea of

troubles seemed to rise before him. What with the evil effects of a dire malady and what with the sad bereavement his cup of miseries was full to the brim. Small pox knows not how to revere age or sex and that fell disease attacked this lad when he had just attained his fifth and deprived him of his eyesight for ever. Misfortunes never come single, and before he completed his twelfth year his parents died, naturally leaving the orphan to the tender mercies of the survivors. The blind boy would ask his uncle and aunt for bread and receive stone. He being oppressed by thirst would beg for water and down flowed a torrent of abusive and filthy words from the hard hearts of those guardians. Probably it was the intention of the happy couple to lay in the heart of the nephew the foundations of those virtues which are essential for the would be reformer. Undoubtedly it was here that the renowned ascetic first learned to be patient, persevering and industrious. But at that particular period of his life the cup became extremely bitter. His home, if ever it could be called so, was presided over by an uncle who surpassed Hiranyakashaypa in cruelty. And there was no Vishnu who could take the *avatar* of *Narasimha* to save this *Prahalada*. Perhaps he did not stand in need of one as he himself by dint of valour was to become a *simha* one day of men and save his *Dharma* and Literature.

#### FOREST LIFE

The twelfth year of his life arrived, but his miseries, however, knew no bounds. The boy being then driven to despair hit upon the plan of running away from the cage in which misfortunes had imprisoned him. One happy day he flew away from it and began to roam about in dense jungles living on roots and fruits and at times brooding over the significance of the

*Gayatri Manta* Forest life did not terrorise him, and why should it? He was a young Yogi and knew no fear. Even in that thick forest, the hand of the Almighty was there to protect him and through him his country's sacred Literature In the land of Shankaracharya and Kumarila bhatta, neither dire destitution nor the ire of wild beasts could bring about the ruin of this saviour of the Vedas. This forest life he led for about three long years and then with a consolation and courage unknown to an atheist, this devotee proceeded to Hirishakesha in the sylvan retreats of which he practised regular *tapasya*—penance—for three more years. Thence he proceeded to Haridwar where Swami Poornananda Saraswati initiated him in the *Sannyasa ashrama* and gave him the happy name of Virajanand Saraswati. Here it was that he studied *Siddhanta-Kaumudi*—a treatise on Sanskrit Grammar—and here it was that years after, his illustrious disciple Swami Dayanand at the famous Kumbha mela hoisted the flag of OUM on the fort of orthodoxy. Kankhal was the next village visited by him. Near this village is now situated the famous *Gurulila* institutions where students reside in company with their preceptors for 16 years at least and observe the rules of *Brahmacharya*. It is this system of education that will revolutionise the science of pedagogy and successfully tackle the problem of imparting secular and religious education to the youths of this country. This unique institution is a monument to the fiery genius of Swami Virajanand, to the profound scholarship and farsightedness of his disciple Dayanand and last but not least to the sturdy optimism of Lala Munshiram. The study of Logic—Nyaya and Vedanta was begun by him in right earnest at Benares. It should also be noted that all the time Swami Virajanand was studying

Sanskrit he was giving instructions to other students who were coming to him to learn So throughout the greater period of his life he remained both a student and a teacher, a combination which has serious disadvantages of its own The combined duties of the teacher and the taught render concentration of attention on one particular subject extremely difficult but with Virajanand the case was quite different The blind sage had a powerful memory to retain anything that was read out to him and was highly endowed with the capacity to communicate knowledge to others At Gaya he studied *Vedanta Darshana* for a pretty long time

#### FROM PALACE TO FOREST

To a genuine Yogi wealth has no attraction whatsoever To him residence either in a palace or a forest makes no difference at all To those who live below 'the smoke and stir of this dim spot, which men call Earth' and 'who with low-thoughted care, confined and pestered in this sinfold, strive to keep up a frail and feverish being,' the joys of a place are fascinating and the horrors of a forest life are terrorising But to those who like Virajanand take a vow of poverty and are bent upon keeping up to any word they utter the pleasures of the world can be no temptation Once Swami Virajanand was standing in the waters of the Ganges and repeating some Sanskrit verses in praise of Vishnu—the All-pervading deity—in a loud and sonorous voice Just then Vinayasingh, the Maharaja of Alwar, happened to be there and the way in which the sage was uttering Sanskrit shlokas captivated the Raja so much that he approached him with a request to accompany him to Alwar and to remain there as a guest of his The blind monk peremptorily replied "Thou art a King and a Yogi I am a beggar and a Yogi These two opposites cannot live in harmony" At the urgent

and earnest requests of the Raja, however, the sage ultimately yielded and agreed to accompany him on the express understanding that Vinayasingh should undertake to study Sanskrit 3 hours a day failing which he would leave the Raja immediately. Leaving out of account some jealous Brahmin priests there was none who ill treated the Swami. The truth loving and scholarly *Sannyasin* was always an object of profound reverence. The Raja was always punctual at his study but one day he absented himself without obtaining the permission previously. The choleric tutor was all wrath, the Raja was quite unable to pacify him and instantaneously Virajanand leaving all his books and money there left the hospitable palace and resumed his peripatetic journeys.

#### AT MATTRA

It was in the year 1893 of the Vikrama era that he proceeded to Mattra and having hired a building opened a Sanskrit school in which he taught Sanskrit Grammar and Logic. At that time it is recorded that a debate took place between the disciples of Virajanand and those of Krishna Shastree, another Sanskrit Pandit of repute. The subject proposed was of no consequence to any but the grammarians. It was to be decided whether a *Sutra* of Panini, *Ajadyutti*—was a genitive Tatpurusha compound or a locative Tatpurusha compound. Swami Virajanand and his disciples held that it was a genitive Tatpurusha. After all it did not matter what it really was, but such hair splitting distinctions have been the cause of wasting much powder and the devoted champions of a particular cause have really wasted much of their precious time in debates of a trifling nature—trifling at any rate to the world outside. It is also said that Swami Virajanand was made to suffer a crushing defeat and all possible

fraudulent means were adopted to achieve that end. However that may be, one thing was certain that in future Virajanand lost all faith in commentaries of Sanskrit Grammar published by selfish men and began gradually to devote his attention to the study *Panini's Ashtadhyayi* in the original. His biographer Pandit Lekharam makes mention of the fact that a South Indian Brahmin it was who first drew his attention to this great work of Panini. That study is so essential that for a correct scientific interpretation of the *Vedas* it is as it were the key to them.

#### REVELATION REVEALED

Without a systematic study of the *Shadangas*—  
 (1) Shiksha (2) Kalpa (3) Vyakarana (4) Nirukta  
 (5) Nighantu (6) Jotisha, Vedic interpretation is impossible. Once did he infuse the spirit of the study of *Rishi kritagranthas*—and lo! the clouds of mysticism and element worship hanging on the *Vedas* were all dispelled. It needed a Dayanand to imbibe this spirit and create a mighty revolution in the world of religions. It was at Mattra this worthy disciple took the vow of spreading the true *Vedic religion* and the parting scene is an historic one. The worthy *Guru* whom physical disabilities incapacitated the undertaking of any great work commands the earnest disciple to move heaven and earth to popularise the study of such *Sat shastas* as the the *Vedas*, the *Upanishads*, and the *Darshanas* and no disciple has so faithfully carried out the mandate of his *Guru*.

#### THE BEAUTIES OF THE VEDIC DHARMA

The key to the scientific interpretation of the *Vedas* was lost and the credit of having found it out belongs to Swami Virajanand. Having come in possession of that key Dayanand unlocked the hidden treasure for the benefit of mankind. It was this patriot sage who preached that the

religion of the Vedas was not and is not one of the worship of stocks and stones but of monotheism pure and simple He studied the the other *Smritis* and *Shastriyas* and came to the right conclusion that both as a system of theology or sociology Vedism was grand and sublime The most scientific division of the four *Varnas*—(1) Brabmin (2) Kshatriya (3) Vaishya (4) Sudra—, of the four *Ashramas*—(1) Bramacharya (2) Grihastha (3) Vanaprasta (4) Sannyasa and of the 16 *Sanskaras* and 5 *Yajnas* struck Dayanand as most sublime and worthy of revival But all this he could not possibly have done if there were no Virajanand So we emphatically declare that the credit of showing the beauties of the *Vedic Dharma* is in a large measure due to Swami Virajanand The study of classical Sanskrit conducted on scientific lines is as it were the Rosetta stone which enables mankind to decipher the Vedic hieroglyphics, the discovery of which fell to the happy lot of the otherwise unhappy Virajanand

#### VIRAJANAND, THE MAN

Virajanand was a man of indomitable courage and fiery enthusiasm His love for the Vedic literature was only equalled by his earnest desire to serve his country and religion By patience and perseverance alone he overcame mountains of difficulties His plain living and high thinking entitle him to be called a *Rishi* His solicitude for the welfare of the pupils who sat at his feet to drink deep the fountains of immortal Sanskrit lore was the outcome of the love he bore to education without which he thought no human being can lay any claim to that title A perusal of the voluminous commentaries of the Vedas of Swami Dayanand will convince any one of the great service he and his guru have rendered to the cause of Sanskrit and Vedism A genuine Yogi,

a profound scholar, a true devotee and an inveterate foe of sham and a real descendant of the mighty seers of yore he shook off the 'mortal coil' in the year 1925 of the Vikrama era and entered those regions of bliss from the 'bourn of which no traveller is said to return'. As long as we have any love for Sanskrit and the Vedas, we cannot afford to forget the yeoman service Swami Virajanand rendered to the cause of Hindu nationality.

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# SWAMI DAYANAND SARASWATI

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## FROM BIRTH TO BOYHOOD

In the year 1924 AD in a village in the State of Morvi in the Kathiawar Peninsula, there was born in a Shaivite family of the Oudeecha sect of Brahmins, a boy who, when he grew up to be a man, was destined to be the original organiser and inspirer of a movement of vast significance in the religious history of India, if not of the whole world. His father, Umbashankar, in addition to holding the office of Jamadar or Collector of Revenue which was hereditary the family carried on a lucrative business as a banker and money-lender. He was besides a Zamindar or a proprietor of an extensive estate. He was as devout a worshipper of Shiva as he was of Lakshmi, the Goddess of Wealth. He was as intelligent as he was stern and as hard working as he was resolute. When Moolshankar—for, that was the original name of our hero—was five years old, his education after the time-honoured traditional methods was taken up in right earnest. He was taught the Devanagari alphabet and made to learn by rote select *shlokas* from sacred writings. In his eighth year the ceremony of investing him with sacred thread was performed, and with it, in strict conformity to the injunctions laid down in the Aryan scriptures, began Moolshankar's career as a *Brahmacharin*. Sand, a Mantras, hymns from the Yajurveda and *shlokas* from Rudradhya, were in course of time committed to memory. His father, as was to be expected of a stern devotee of Shiva, desired that his son should follow in his footsteps and lead the life of an ideal Shaivite at by following to the very letter all that was prescribed in the

authoritative books of Shaivism Umbashankar would often take his young son to places where Kathas from Shiva-pooran were recited He, many a time, would insist on his son's undergoing hardships consequent on the observance of strict fasting in order to propitiate Shiva, so much so that his mother who was extremely solicitous for his physical welfare had to intercede on his behalf and beg for mercy With a view to initiate him into the mysteries of Shaivism his father gave him the first lesson on Linga Puja, the daily performance of which is obligatory on every Shaivite Thus several years passed by And when Moolshankar was in his 14th year, an event which, as it were, cast the shadows of the changes that came over him in subsequent years, happened In the annals of Shaivism there is no day which is more sacred than the Shivaratri which is commonly observed in the Chaturdashi of the latter half of the month of Phalguna but in Kathiawar it falls a month earlier, i.e., on Magha Vadhya Chaturdashi On the night of the Shivaratri of the year we are speaking of, Molshankar reluctantly followed his father to a temple of Shiva situated on the outskirts of the village and joined the other devotees in observing the fast and in keeping vigil the whole night by telling the beads of the rosary and singing hymns in honour of the deity This went on till a late hour of the night Midnight arrived The lay devotees, the temple keeper, and even his own father, being unable to resist the fatigue, fell into a deep slumber The lad who had all along been attempting to overcome drowsiness by bathing his eyes in water slowly got up, stood at a respectful distance from the idol, and began observing What did he see before him? The idol of Shiva with the offerings of the votaries spread before it was just visible by the light of

the tiny lamp that was burning there A mouse creeping out of its hole appeared on the scene Being attracted by offerings, it slowly approached the idol and rather irreverently began to help itself to the good things In the hurry consequent on the migrations from its hole to the idol, it desecrated the latter by impudently running over it

Reflections of various sorts took possession of Moolshankar's mind "Can the idol I see before me," thought the lad to himself, "be the self-same deity which, according to the Puranas, is the Lord of Kailas, holds a trident in his hands, bestrides a bull, beats the dumroo, pronounces blessings or curses at his sweet will and pleasure, and destroys the whole Universe at the end of every cosmic cycle?" Being unable to suppress the many doubts that arose in his mind in rapid succession, he awoke his father and requested him in a respectful tone to explain the anomaly The unsuspecting father attempted to explain the rationale of image worship by bringing forward the stock arguments advanced in its favour by its apologists He said that in Kaliyuga, Shiva was invisible, that piece of stone before him had been consecrated by worthy Brabmins, that since then, the deity had been residing in it, and that it was symbolic of Shiva's greatness and glory The ingenious explanation of the father did not, however, carry conviction to the inquiring mind of the son, who, to give the event its proper place in the spiritual evolution of the man, was laying the foundation of those qualities which enabled him in after years to be the presiding genius of one of the greatest movements of Hindu Protestantism in modern India He immediately left the temple and went home straight in a perturbed state of mind Once there, finding himself away from his father's coercive

influence, he partook of the sweetmeats kindly given him by his mother and thus broke the fast only to be censured by his father next day This memorable Shivaratri incident in the life of the great reformer has been viewed from different stand points by different critics While there are some who consider the moral and the intellectual value of this phenomenon as very low, others like the late Sir Syed Ahmed Khan, the founder of the M A O, College at Aligarh, speak of it as an act of special revelation from on high The reformer's admirers, however, celebrate the *Dayanand Bodha Utsava* in honour of the event as they say it was on that night the seed of spiritual awakening was first sown in his mind

#### IN QUEST OF IMMORTALITY

About two years after the incident related in the previous paragraph, that is, when Moolshankar was in his sixteenth year, a tragic occurrence in the family made a deep and lasting impression on his mind and filled him with *Vairagya* His knowledge of Theology and Metaphysics, imperfect though it was, at this stage in his life had, however, already familiarised him with the problems of life and death, but were it not for a certain event that now occurred he would perhaps never have seriously thought of solving them Once, amidst the joy and festivity of a musical entertainment he was attending in company of several of his relations, news of an alarming character was brought to him His younger sister, they said, had been attacked by cholera The party hurried home and shortly after, in spite of the best efforts to save her, she succumbed to the fell disease Everywhere there was gloom and sorrow His loving sister whom he had seen hale and healthy but few hours before was lying there dead before him The heart rending lamentations of his kith and kin,

filled the chamber of death Every one present was giving vent to his sorrow Moolshankar alone stood there as if unaffected by what he saw before him

"What could be the reason of this strange behaviour," said everyone to himself Little did they know that this young man of sixteen was then pondering over the deep problems of life and death and of the ways and means to be rid of the miseries of this mundane existence Suffice it to say, that this calamity opened the young Moolshankar's eyes to one of the stern realities of life and set him a thinking But time, the great healer of all afflictions and the effacer of mental impressions, would have succeeded in diverting his mind from those enquiries and enmeshed him into the inextricable bonds of every-day life, had not another event which happened a couple of years after, once again led him to resume the solution of these problems Moolshankar's paternal uncle, who was to him his friend, philosopher and guide and to whom, therefore, he was deeply attached, was suddenly taken ill of the self same disease which had carried away his (Moolshankar's) younger sister Despite expert medical assistance the disease claimed its victim Lying on his death-bed he sent for Moolshankar to pronounce his last benediction on him As the flame of life was being slowly extinguished, tears were gushing forth from his uncle's eyes Strange thoughts came surging in the mind of this young man Who that has stood by the death bed of a near relative or a dear friend has not felt that after all this physical body is one day to crumble to dust? When even ordinary mortals like ourselves think and think seriously on such occasions, though for the time being, of the eternal doom that overtakes mankind, what wonder if great

souls like the one of this sketch under similar circumstances should ponder over the true import disease, decrepitude and death? How escape from the agonies of death, and how to be above all feelings of pleasure and pain, were the questions that now suggested themselves to young Moolshankar. The solution of these problems became the ruling passion of his mind, and everyone to whom he turned for a solution gave him to understand that the only means whereby death might be conquered was the practice of *yoga* which could only be learnt after severe discipline under qualified *gurus*, who in these degenerate days were so few and who then, as now, could only be found in their secluded retreats amidst sylvan solitudes. Accordingly, Moolshankar resolved on acquiring Yogic Sidhees and with this end in view was waiting for an opportunity to renounce the joys of his hearth and home in quest of immortality. He tried his best to keep his parents entirely in the dark about the changes that were coming over him, but as he grew enthusiastic over the affair, his father somehow got scent of his son's intentions. Like many a fond parent he thought that marriage was the only effective cure for such eccentricities as he took his son's aspirations to be and strongly desired to bind him down for ever in adamantine chains of matrimonial life. The young man, however, proposed that he would first go to Benares to study Astronomy and Physics and begged of his father not to tie the millstone round his neck till at least he had finished the education. He was, as a compromise, allowed to undergo some training under a Pandit residing in a village, about six miles from Morvi. It was, however, impossible for a buoyant young man not yet out of his teens to conceal from those around him the inner workings of his mind. The Pandit teacher,

shrewd as he was, very soon studied the runaway tendencies of his over ardent pupil and brought the matter to the notice of Moolsbankar's father with the result that preparations were soon made to get the young man jolted to what would have proved in his case a double cursedness. When matters assumed a turn which left no doubt as to the intentions of his parents, which intentions there seemed every prospect of being fructified, Moolsbankar determined to adopt the only course open to him of bidding a good bye to parents' home and all and uninterruptedly pursue his cherished ideal away from the sensuous snares of life.

#### RENUNCIATION

At last, finding every act of persuasion ineffective in turning his obdurate parents from their purpose, Moolsbankar in the evening of a hot day in the month of Jeshtsha crossed the Rubicon by stealing away from his paternal home. The sudden and unexpected death of a dear sister followed by that of a much beloved uncle opened his spiritual eyes and started him on those wanderings in quest of truth which culminated in his enunciating those principles of thought and action which when followed lead one to the attainment of mookti. When he first started on these wanderings he had to follow, in order to elude pursuit and avoid detection, such routes as were at a considerable distance from public thoroughfares, the result being that some miserable mendicants whom he met on these routes deprived him of all the silver and gold ornaments he had on his person, thus preparing him, as they said, for his peaceful pursuit of mookti, but in effect freeing him from any great danger to his life which might have befallen him in his future perilous wanderings. He then walked for miles together till at last he met a Sannyasi, Lala

Bhagat Ram by name, to whom he related his adventures and explained the object of his renunciation, at the same time requesting him to admit him into the order of *Naishthead Brahmacharies*. The good old Sannyasin accordingly initiated him and gave him the name of *Shuddha Chaitanya*, the pure souled, a name which correctly describes the character of our hero even at the time we are speaking of.

#### STRUGGLE AND DELIVERANCE FROM SAMSARA

Soon after, hearing that a *mela*—a religious fair—would be held at Siddhapur, a place situated on the Saraswati, Shuddha Chaitanya betook himself thither, with a view as he hoped to find some *yogee* who would initiate him into the mysteries of *yoga* on the acquisition of which he had set his heart. On his way to the place he met a *Sannyasin* who happened to know him and his family. The worthy gentleman remonstrated with him for having entered the Order of Brahmacharins. Reaching Siddhapur, Shuddha Chaitanya put up in a temple of "Neelkant Mahadeva". In the meanwhile, the *Sannyasin* who had met him on his way to Siddhapur, prompted perhaps by the best of motives, carried word to the family of the runaway Brahmacharin that he had seen him going as a pilgrim to Siddhapur where probably he could be found. The disconsolate father receiving this happy tidings about the discovery of his son started immediately with a batch of Sepoys for Siddhapur. Arriving at the place in due time, he traced his son in the temple spoken of above. Face to face with his son who now was quite transformed wearing as he did ochre coloured garb of a Brahmacharin, the irate father flew into a rage and in a savage manner tore Shuddha Chaitanya's garb to tatters. The youthful Brahmacharin had no go but to bow and obey and

promised to retrace his steps and accompany his father home to begin life again in the usual manner. The pretensions and promises of the son had no effect on the mind of the father who, all the same, ordered his armed followers to keep a strict watch on his son's movements. It was decided that they should start on their journey homewards on the morrow. Night came on. The young aspirant after *yoga vidya* was being closely watched. The sentinels began keeping their watches by rotation. Hour after hour glided monotonously. The youthful prisoner was, as was to be expected, passing a restless night and was looking intently on the hirelings who stood between him and liberty—to pursue his magnificent ideal unmolested. This went on till midnight and on into the early morning hours. Suddenly he saw—what did he see?—that the sentinel who was on his duty then had gone to sleep. A thought suddenly flashed across the mind of the would-be champion of the Vedic faith that here was an opportunity to make a bold bid for liberty. Scarcely had the idea entered his mind than it was put into execution. Then giving a slip to the watchman, *Shuddha Chaitanya* once again effected his deliverance from *Samsara* for good and resumed his wanderings in pursuit of his long cherished ideal. Thus the Rubicon had been crossed. But many an adventure was yet in store for the young enthusiast before he could finally dedicate himself to the cause to which he was wedded. Once free from the restraint imposed upon him by his over-discreet father, *Shuddha Chaitanya*'s first thought was to prepare himself to elude the search which he knew would certainly be made for him soon after. He was, therefore anxiously looking for a hiding place which he soon found. Under the spreading of a Peepul tree, there stood a small temple of *Shiva*. Considering the thickly

covered branches of the tree a safe place for his retreat, he climbed up and hid himself there. The night passed and the day dawned and his worst fears proved true. His father discovering 'that the caged bird had flown away,' had sent the mounted Sepoys in all directions to trace and recapture him. Suddha Chaitanya, now perched on the branches of the hospitable Peepul, was alarmed to see the dreaded hirelings approaching the temple and making a vigorous search for their fugitive prisoner. Fortunately for him, they did not direct their kind attentions to the tree. It was with a sigh of relief that he saw them beating a retreat after their wild goose chase. The day was advancing and he dared not leave his retreat and wend his way to his unknown destination, lest he should be captured by the same or another batch of the search party. He did not think it prudent to leave his self selected place of captivity till night fall when he got down and once again set out on his wanderings. The only food, if such it may be called, which he tasted during the live long day was the water contained in a small *Lota* which he happened to carry with him. Reaching a village, a few miles off, he refreshed himself and with the rising sun he resumed his journey. After spending some time in Ahmedabad and Baroda, he betook himself to a place situated on the banks of the holy Narbada, where he hoped to come across some genuine *yogees* who would unravel to him the mysteries of the mystic science of *yoga*. Here he read several works on *Vedanta* under one Sannyasi, by name Paramahaasma Paramanand, the result of which study was that, at that time, he believed in the identity of the human soul with that of the Universal Spirit.

#### HIS INITIATION INTO THE SANNYASASHRAVA

In conformity with the rules to be observed by a Brahmachari, Suddha Chaitanya had to cook

his food himself, and this greatly interfered with the studies which he had undertaken. He was, therefore, anxious to be initiated into the *Sannyasahram* which would enable him to pursue his studies unmolested. He, accordingly, approached a Sannyasi by name Chidashram with a request to give him the *Sanyas*. That Sannyasi, however, peremptorily refused to grant the request of the Brahmachari on the ground of his being too young for that *Ashrama*. In spite of this refusal, Suddha Chaitanya remained as firm as ever in his determination to become a Sannyasin and eagerly longed for that memorable day in his lifetime when he could become an absolute master of himself. A strong will he had and a sure way he sought to find. He waited and waited for one full year on the banks of the Narbada river till, at last, he saw one day a Dandi Swami and a Brahmachari, both of whom were on their way to Dwaraka. Here was a magnificent opportunity for our hero. The Brahmachari who accompanied the Swami introduced Suddha Chaitanya to that Dandi and a conversation followed, in the course of which our young aspirant after *Brahma Vidya* was deeply impressed with the profound learning of the Sannyasin. Suddha Chaitanya at first opened his heart to the other Brahmachari and begged of him to recommend him to the Sannyasin so that he might be pleased to initiate him in his own *Ashrama*. Swami Purnananda, for that was the name of his Sannyasin of the Maharashtra, hesitated a little at first and considering the youth and the caste of the aspirant declined to 'entertain the petition'. After much discussion, however, on the third day after their first meeting, the Sannyasin though belonging to 'Maharashtra' consecrated the Brahmachari from Gujarat and gave him the staff of his Order,

naming him *Swami Dayanand Saraswati*. Dayanand was now in his twenty fourth year and had not lost sight of that grand ideal, for the pursuit of which he had left his home very early in life. He for some time studied with Swami Purnananda and again resumed his wanderings in search of *yogees*.

#### DECLINES MAHANTSHIP

In his wanderings, he came across two *yogees* who were known to him as Jwalanand Puri and Shivanand Giri. These two ascetics taught him the method of attaining beatitude through the practice of *yoga*. At Their he for the first time saw the books known as *Tantras*, a perusal of which convinced him that they were a filthy and a dangerous sort of literature inasmuch as they preached that the attainment of salvation was possible only through the use of intoxicating drugs, fish and flesh. From Their, he proceeded to Kashmir and after undergoing tremendous difficulties reached the Himalayan mountains, which he believed to be the abode of *Mahatmas* or *yogees*. Without rest or repose, without food or water, he wandered through the dense forests but nowhere was he able to trace these celestial beings. On his return journey, he happened to see a *mahant* in a rich monastery at Skhemmatha. That *mahant* was very much impressed by the personality of Dayanand and offered him the *mahantship*. The young Sannyasin's reply gives us a glimpse into the character of our hero. He addressed the *mahant* in these words:

I find Sir, you neither strive for nor possess the knowledge of that for which I have discarded all temporal glory and that object is the acquisition of the secret knowledge, true erudition genuine *yoga* and ultimately *mool-ti* which can be attained only by the purity of one's soul and by the proper discharge of all the duties towards one's fellow man and by striving for the elevation of man!

It is needless to add that Dayanand rejected the offer and again he wandered from place to place in search of knowledge and *gurus*

#### LIFE A VOID AND A CHASM

Like Ulysses of Trojan fame, he went from place to place in order to satisfy the cravings of his inner soul. Sometimes he would ascend the lofty mountains; at other times he would descend into the deep valleys and search every nook and corner of the caves in dense forests. The net result of all these wanderings was that he hardly came across any genuine *guru*. To Dayanand many a time was a result of keen disappointment born of dire reverses and sad frustration of fond hopes, life presented itself as a void and a chasm. His travels and wanderings taught him that many of these *Sadhus* were steeped in ignorance and superstition that their asceticism was a mere sham and their knowledge of Metaphysics and Theology was superficial. Wild fancies moribund imagination and grim asceticism do not rule up *joga*. Here and there of course he came across men of sterling worth but they were few and far between. Now thirty, or long years of his life time had rolled by and still his thirst for knowledge was never quenched. Having nothing particular to do at this juncture he took a survey of the society and what did he find there?

#### HIS VIEW OF THE SOCIETY

The rigours of the caste system were eating into the vitals of the society. Religious leaders were breaking their heads over questions of vital importance to the well being of society. Religion consisted more in the appearances put on than in the lives lived. Moral cowardice, mental degeneration and social degradation were to be seen on all sides. Early marriages meaningless

rituals and superfluous ceremonials were the order of the day. Love of knowledge was not existing, and study of the arts was neglected. The Brahmins oppressed the Shudras, the rich cared not for the poor, and the strong ill treated the weak.

As there was no freedom of thought and liberty of judgment, all round progress became an impossibility. In fact, he found that those times constituted a dark period in the religious history of India. Dayanand then thought to himself how it could be possible for him to evolve order out of chaos and whether he was the man fitted to create a mighty force which would exert a steady pressure on the diverse elements of the Hindu Society, in order to combine and coalesce them into one whole. Similar were the riddles that now confronted Dayanand. He, however, knew full well that he was yet ill equipped to carry on the stupendous work of reorganising and consolidating Hindu Society.

#### HOW TO CONSOLIDATE AND RE ORGANISE

The Hindu Society, he argued, had religion for its basis. He, therefore, thought that the scientific study of the *Shastras* and their rationalistic interpretation were quite necessary, if at all any success were to be achieved in his attempts to reconstruct that Society. Revival of religion seemed to him an absolute necessity. Without a scientific study of the *Shastras*, no such revival was possible. The *Vedas*, the revealed Scriptures, had become sealed books to many. Who could teach him the correct interpretation of the *Vedas*, who could acquaint him with the grandeur and sublimity of the philosophy of the *Upanishads* and who could give him instructions to dive deep into the ocean of the *Dai shanas* to pick up gems of 'purest ray serene'? These were the questions that now troubled him.

most Just then fortunately for him he heard that a great Vedic scholar was maintaining a school of his own at Mathura Dayanand whom experience had taught that no success was possible without undergoing hardships turned his footsteps towards Mathura

#### SWAMI VIRAJANAND AND HIS MESSAGE

The name of that preceptor was Swami Virajanand He was a blind monk, an ardent ascetic, and a profound Vedic scholar At one time he was under the patronage of the Prince of Alwar Were it not for his choleric temper and self willed nature, the monk would have passed the remainder of his lifetime under the roof of the Raja in peace and plenty But he was destined to do and achieve something great and glorious in this world He was no doubt a scholar but his physical infirmities were too great for him to be able to set right a world so full of malice, hatred ignorance and bigotry His tremendous enthusiasm and his mighty energy where only to find a proper channel and when once he would infuse that spirit in a worthy disciple, his mission in life would be fulfilled His name then would find a permanent place in the muster roll of the benefactors of humanity To such a monk, on the 11th November 1860, Dayanand in all sincerity of purpose repaired A middle aged man of thirty six still approaching a quin to sit at his feet and drink deep at the fountain of knowledge shows us clearly with what intense love and ardent devotion he applied himself that Dayanand was a worthy disciple in whom he could place entire confidence to perpetuate his mission, he delivered to him his first message

Look here Dayananda! Sanskrit Literature can be divided into two periods—the Ante Mahabharata and the Post Mahabharata The doctrines embodied in the Ante Maha

'Bharatha Literature clearly indicate the high watermark of spiritual, moral and intellectual greatness reached in ancient times by the Aryans. The books also in that period were composed by Rishis who led a noble life, whose whole existence was one pillar of light and strength to erring humanity and these books are a wholesome reading. In the Post Maha-bharata period, however, the study of these works was neglected and intensely prejudiced, and narrow minded men wrote books the study of which became ruinous to the cause of Dharma. You, therefore shall have to abjure those that are the works of bad authors and study only the *Rishi Granthas* (books written by Rishis.)

The disciple bowed down reverently and with great humility took a vow that he would read only those works which he, the *guru*, would recommend to him. With this determination, he began his course of study in right earnest. Already Dayanand in quest of the elixir of life had traversed all seats of learning but nowhere could he find such a worthy *guru* as this blind sage. But here too, comfort, ease and luxury were all denied to him. The son of a landlord was to sustain himself on a handful of grains, the child born with a silver spoon in the mouth had to depend upon the bounties of a charitably disposed gentleman for a few copper coins wherewith he could buy his books or other necessaries for the maintenance of the life of an ascetic. Again, to add to his misery, Virajanand, his *guru*, was, as has been mentioned above, of a choleric temper. On the slightest pretext he sometimes would kick Dayanand out of his house. For a trivial offence or for the neglect of duty, his stern rod would descend upon the body of Dayanand and even long after the scars of the wounds which were left on his body, which wounds were inflicted by that stout cudgel of the stern master, brought to him 'happy recollections of happier moments' he spent in Virajanand's *loka* at Mathura. In spite of all this, he served his tutor diligently, he

patiently bore all the miseries, he fetched water for the *guru* from a great distance, he swept his room and washed his clothes as well. In spare moments he learnt *Mahabhashya* and other works of Rishis. For a period of about two years and a half he sat at his feet and drank deep at the founts of immortal learning. At last, the parting day came. The *Chela* with a few cloves in his hand, for which the *guru* had great fondness, approached him to bid farewell and said, "My revered Guru, I am a poor man and have nothing more to give you," "No, Dayananda," replied his Guru, I am anxious that you should part with something that you possess." On receiving a reply from Dayanand in the affirmative, Virajanand delivered his second message.

Go thou, my disciple, and make a proper use of the education you have acquired. There is ignorance in the land. People do not know the right from the wrong. They wrangle about castes and creeds and neglect the study of the Vedas. Teach them to study the true books to believe in one God and in one religion taught by the Vedas.

Dayanand received the message in the way he ought to have received it and bowing down reverentially took a vow that he would consecrate his life to the cause of the revival of the Vedic religion. With this determination he took leave of his Guru and resumed his peregrinations.

#### HIS TRAVELS

The early training which Dayanand had received was best suited to call forth in him a feeling of deep reverence for the religion of his forefathers. This feeling was intensified by a sentiment of love and admiration for a pure form of Hinduism, engendered in him by his Guru. Again, commonsense dictated to him by the necessity of at first familiarising the followers

of that religion with the evils that had crept into it He also knew that all the forces of bigotry, fanaticism and pig headed conservatism would be arrayed against him when he would begin his *Pacha*, work Come what may, he was determined to carry on the noble work entrusted to him by his Guru From Mathura he went to Agra where he delivered sermons condemning idolatry and other practices of a like nature In 1865, he proceeded to Gwalior where cholera was then raging in an epidemic form The priests who were more or less the great pillars of orthodoxy had already begun the exposition of Shlokas from the *Bhagvat* By a sad perversity of fate, however, there were bereavements even in the royal family and the fell disease showed no signs of abatement Here Dayanand fearless of frowns and careless of favours spoke in condemnatory terms of such books as the *Bhagvat* and suggested that as treatises on Theology, they bore no comparison whatsoever with the Vedas or the Upanishads In 1866, he went to Ajmere where also he followed his usual programme of delivering sermons and holding debates and is believed to have spoken to the then Commissioner of Ajmere on the necessity of eradicating social evils by legislation Dayanand even then seemed to have felt to the great necessity of preserving the bovine species in a country like India and, therefore, he approached another high official with a request to put a stop to cow killing in India The kind officer, however, intimated to him that nothing could possibly be done by him at least in the matter

#### THE KUMBHA MELA AT HARIDWAR

Haridwar is a place most sacred to the Hindus Its situation also almost at the foot of the majestic Himalayan Mountains adds to

its grace The grandeur of the natural scenery there is simply 'unparalleled' The perennial verdure on the lofty hills, the majestic flow of sacred Ganga and the salubrious climate of the place render the place worthy of a visit even for a non-Hindu Here once in twelve years a great fair called the *Kumbha mela* is held when millions of men flock together from all parts of India in order to have a bath in the river, which is supposed to purify their souls of all their sins and give them a passport to Heaven The year 1867 was one in which this fair was to come off and Dayanand could not think of a better opportunity to propound his doctrines He, therefore, with three or four followers of his, went there and put up a shed not very far from Haridwar in which he took his abode In the presence of Rajahs, Maharajahs, Pandits and Sannyasins, all of whom came there to have a bath in the Ganges, the solitary monk had the moral courage to denounce in strongest possible terms the dogmas and beliefs common to *Puranic Hinduism* The protestations of this Indian Luther were of no avail His cry was a cry in the wilderness Superstition and prejudices die hard and before *Puranic Hinduism* could be purged of all the evils that have crept into it, not one, but many Dayanands will have to take up the work of regeneration in right earnest With what he saw at Haridwar he felt himself greatly disappointed He came to the conclusion that mere preaching alone would not serve his purpose If he should successfully fight out the hydra headed monster of superstition, he should be better equipped With such sad thoughts born of disappointment, he distributed all he had in the shape of clothes and utensils among his followers and retired into a solitude to perform *tapas* After leading an austere life of self-

discipline for some time, he thought of instituting certain changes in his usual programme and thought of adopting the following means forthwith —

(1) In order to expose the fallacies in other systems of religion he should carry on a more vigorous campaign by preaching, delivering lectures and conducting debates

(2) He should find schools and seminaries so that young men might be trained who would perpetuate his mission

(3) He should write pamphlets, compose books and undertake the work of giving a rational interpretation to the Vedic Mantras Wherewith the people could easily understand what Vedic religion was

For some years to come he followed this programme. In 1868, he carried on his *priachai* work at Kanauj, Faizabad and Cawnpore, where some orthodox Brahmins spread a rumour that Dayanand was a Christian missionary in the disguise of a Sannayasi, whose object was to convert Hindus to the faith of Christianity by condemning the worship of stocks and stones. They had even the audacity to excommunicate those that came to hear him and in several cases are believed to have prescribed the dose of *Prayaschitham*—a purificatory ceremony—to those imbecile intellects.

#### A DEBATE OF HISTORIC CELEBRITY

As a logician Swami Dayanand had no rival and as a debater he had no equal. His power of reasoning was marvellous. His thrilling eloquence produced so wonderful an effect on the mind of his hearers that 'those who came to scoff remained to pray' and realised the significance of the principles of *Dharma* as enunciated in the *Vedas*. But the solitary monk was not

without his enemies and in any public debate in which he took part, his adversaries adopted most questionable methods of claiming victory—if that may be called so—for themselves. In the course of his wanderings, Dayanand reached Cawnpore in the month of July 1869, and lost no time in issuing manifestoes after manifestoes, vehemently declaring that Vedas did not sanction idolatry and that the Puranas were not authoritative books in matters religious, the result of which naturally was that there was a great consternation in the orthodox circle. The leaders of the orthodox party thought it best under the circumstances to arrange for a public debate and once for all denounce in the strongest terms possible the 'heretic Sannyasin,' who however was quite ready to accept the challenge. Accordingly, on the 31st of July 1869, a grand meeting was convened, and Mr W Thaire, the Joint Magistrate of Cawnpore, was in the chair. Apparently no better selection could have been made. Perchance not a single individual could come forward from the orthodox party to preside over a meeting in which some subtle metaphysical questions were being discussed and, therefore, a representative of the British Government, who was a Sanskrit scholar of no mean repute and who could not be expected to be biased in favour of any particular individual was offered the chair and like a true Britisher he readily accepted it. The meeting came off on the appointed day and though the orthodox party endeavoured to claim victory for themselves, the president, Mr Thaire, decided in favour of Swami Dayanand and remarked that 'Dayanand's arguments were in accordance with the Vedas and he won the day.'

From Cawnpore he proceeded to Benares, which was then believed to be the great centre of Sanskrit learning, and was actually the

stronghold of the orthodox Pandits Reaching Kasi on the 23rd of October 1869, he began to assault the city of myth, and man! No longer could the pillars of orthodoxy remain silent They were keenly alive to the sense of great danger which awaited them and even the Maharajah of Benares thought it best to consult the Pandits so that they might devise means to avert the danger It was unanimously decided, to hold a *Shastri artha*—a debate with Dayanand, and by mutual consent the 17th of November was decided upon as the day most convenient for the *Shastri artha* The meeting was largely attended and it fairly represented the great Sanskrit scholars, who graced the occasion by their presence Even the Maharajah himself was present The proceedings began punctually at 3 P.M On that memorable day and in that great assembly, the solitary Sannyasin was busily engaged in answering the objections raised by the Pandits, who were attempting to prove that the Vedas did sanction idolatry Suddenly one Pandit by name Madwacharya handed over a book to Dayanand saying that it was a copy of the Vedas, at the same time directing his attention to a particular passage in that book which sanctioned the worship of idols Just at the time Dayanand was examining the contents of the book, a hue and cry was raised that Dayanand was deserted The stentorian voice of the reformer was drowned amidst the deafening cheers given by men who were actuated by sinister motives and who were quite incapable of rising above the feelings of jealousies and selfishness Everything ended in smoke No definite conclusion was arrived at, and the meeting dispersed But from the accounts given in the newspapers, one can surmise that the treatment meted out to Dayanand was most ignominious

## HIS VISIT TO CALCUTTA

From Kasi, Dayanand went to Calcutta. Just then the *Sanatana Dharma Rakshini Sabha* was contemplating to found a Sanskrit school there, run on Vedic lines, and Dayanand was quite willing to co operate with the members and help them materially towards the establishment of the seminary. Again, the Brahmo Samaj there was wielding a powerful influence over the minds of the educated public, and the Vedic scholar could find no better field for sowing the seeds of Vedism where already the pioneers of Reform, men like Raja Ram Mohan Roy, had prepared the field for him. In response to an invitation sent to him by Mr Chandra Sen, Barrister at law, Dayanand went, in the month of December 1872, to Calcutta and remained as a guest of the gentleman in the garden of Baboo Sarendra Mohan. He delivered many lectures there in Sanskrit on various topics. The Brahmo leaders were very much impressed by his eloquence, though some of them could not fall in with the views expressed by the Sannyasin on the rationale of *Yagno paritam*—the wearing of the sacred thread—and the performance of *Agnibotra*. Dayanand spoke on the 'philosophy of Darshanas' and proved that the *Sankhya Darshana* was not atheistic as was then generally believed by many Sanskrit scholars. Baboo Keshab Chandra Sen, Maharsi Devendra Nath Tagore, and many men of light and leading paid him frequent visits and were all favourably impressed with what they saw and learnt of Dayanand. At the suggestion of Keshab Chandra Sen, Dayanand henceforward began to deliver his lectures in Hindi instead of in Sanskrit, as his teachings were misinterpreted by the translators. The contact with Brahmo leaders also must have convinced him of the necessity of founding and organizing a Samaj.

without which he never hoped to perpetuate the mission of his worthy Guru, though this idea took a practical shape only in Bombay later on. For want of practical support, the idea of founding the Sanskrit school was abandoned.

#### HIS VISIT TO BOMBAY

Leaving Calcutta on the first of April 1873, he arrived at Hugly, where he held a debate with Pandit Tara Charan on 'Idolatry'. He thence proceeded to Cawnpore and Farukhabad, where he had an interview with Sir Charles Muir, the then Lieutenant Governor of N W P whom he addressed on the necessity of cow protection in an agricultural country like India. The sympathetic officer gave a kind hearing to whatever the monk said and promised to do what he could in due course. In the latter part of the year we are speaking of, the energetic reformer delivered many lectures in several places as Aligarh, Brindabhan and Mathura on various topics connected with the true *Sanathana Dharma*. He remained in Allahabad till the end of September, 1874. Passing through and Jabalpur, he, in response to an invitation from some leading gentlemen in Bombay, made his first appearance in the capital of the Western Presidency early in November 1874. Bombay then, as now, was the centre of commercial activity and the majority of the members of the trading class, with the exception of that enlightened community of Parsis, were the followers of Vallabhacharya. A band of earnest and zealous reformers had already established the Prarthana Samaj and young men of Bombay were being influenced by the teachings of that body. Dayanand's attention was, at first, drawn to that Vaishnavite sect, and he found that some evils were eating into the vitals of society, and

he mercilessly exposed many such evil practices, the result of which was that attempts were made to administer poison and thus cut short the life's journey of that great well-wisher of his fellow-men. The orthodox Pandits of Bombay could do no more than issue an anonymous handbill which contained some twenty-four questions to be answered by Dayanand. It is needless to add that though this handbill, anonymous as it was, ought to have been treated with indifference, the Vedic scholar answered all of them satisfactorily.

#### THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE FIRST ARYA SAMAJ

Leaving Bombay, he went to Ahmedabad and Rajkot, which he left on the 18th of January 1875, to visit Bombay for the second time. The work of reform undertaken by the Brahmo Samaj in Calcutta, which was supplemented by the Prarthana Samaj established in Bombay, should have brought home to the mind of Dayanand and some of his admirers the fact that without the establishment of a regularly organised body, no great success could be achieved and no social regeneration was possible. No time was lost in framing a set of rules for the guidance of the members of the organization, and in a public meeting convened on the 10th of 1875, an announcement was made, the rules were read, and the first Samaj was formally established. The seed sown in 1875 has developed itself into a mighty tree and its branches to day are spreading far and wide under the shade of which many a weary traveller can hope to get rest and repose. The society was named the Arya Samaj, and no better name could have been given. At first 28 rules were read out in the meeting referred to above, but these were a collection of bye-laws and principles. It was only in the year 1877, when the Swami was working in the Punjab, that these 28 rules were remodelled and recast,

and now the following ten principles are recognised by all the Arya Samajists —

(1) The primordial root of all true knowledge and of everything that is made known by true knowledge is the Supreme Being

(2) God is All Truth and All Beatitude. He is Omnipresent, Omniscient and Omnipotent. He is Formless, Just, Benevolent, Unborn, Endless, Infinite, Unchangeable, Beginningless, Incomparable, Support of all, the one Designer and Director of the whole Universe, Undecaying, Imperishable, Fearless, Eternal, Holy and Maker of the Universe. *To him alone worship is due.*

(3) The Veda is the scripture of the knowledge. It is the paramount duty of every Arya to learn, teach, hear and preach the Veda

(4) We should ever be ready to accept Truth and to renounce Untruth

(5) All acts should be done according to *Dharma* after a thorough investigation of right and wrong

(6) The prime object of the Arya Samaj is to do good to the world—that is to promote the physical, spiritual and social good of every sentient being

(7) Our conduct towards all should be guided by Love, Righteousness and Justice

(8) We should destroy *Nescience* and promote science, physical and spiritual

(9) No person should be content with promoting his own good only, but he should look for his good in the good of all

(10) All men should abide by the laws of Society calculated to promote the well-being of all, but every body is free to observe the laws affecting his individual well-being

Besides those ten principles, there are other byelaws which are called *Upamiyamas*

#### LECTURES IN POONA

In the year 1875, Swami Dayanand delivered about 15 lectures in Poona on various topics as "The Transmigration of Souls," "The Vedas," etc. In the capital city of the powerful Peshwas, the treatment meted out to Dayanand was not all befitting. Even Sanskrit scholars of repute

and Maratha Pandits, many of whom knew English as well, joined in condemning Dayanand and his teachings. Referring to his visit, a Marathi newspaper recorded the following —

In response to an invitation from the influential and learned portion of the Poona Community, Swami Dayanand arrived here, staying during the month of June and July, 1875. We had occasion to hear some fifteen or sixteen lectures in the local Hindu Club Building. These meetings were always full and fascinated with the style speaking of the great orator and moved by the Upadesh which his speeches contained, the truth loving people of the town received him in a manner at once cordial and respectful. One day, they seated him on an elephant and took him through the various parts of the city. The greedy, mischievous, harebrained, thoughtless, selfish and vindictive individuals in the Poona Community, however, could not bear, to see this honour shown to him, and they did what they should have abstained from doing. Under these circumstances, the availing of the Police assistance became a matter of necessity.

#### THE CHANDAPUR FAIR

Chandapur is a small village in the District of Shabjanpur (U P) In this village Munshi Pyare Lal, in the year 1887, arranged for the holding of a religious fair, where representatives of different religions could come together and ascertain the truth regarding *Dharma*. Rev Mr Scott and Rev Mr Parker represented Christianity, while on behalf of Mohammadanism, Moulvi Mohamad Knsim and Syed Abdul Mansoor were to speak. The following five questions were raised for discussion —

- (1) When, out of what, and why did God create the world?
- (2) Is God all pervading?
- (3) How can God be just and merciful?
- (4) Which books are best fitted to be styled as the revealed ones? What proofs can be brought forward to show whether *Bible*, *Koran* or *Ieda* is the word of God?
- (5) What is salvation, and how can it be attained?

The replies of Swami Dayanand were as follows —

God made the world from *Pralriti* which is the material cause of the Universe and is also eternal As God is eternal, even so is this material cause God has neither beginning nor end and even so is *Pralriti* God makes the primeval root-substance assuming various phenomenal shapes God works upon subtle elements and evolves out of them gross material At the time of *pralaya* God separates the atoms The process of evolution and involution under Divine direction and control is constant and unceasing Whatever is shall be in future and whatever is not can never be Something can never come out of nothing Now if God is to be considered as the material cause of the Universe, we are forced to the conclusion that He himself constitutes the world just as the jar cannot be different from the earth (of which it is composed), if He be the efficient cause, his position becomes analogous to that of the potter who cannot fashion the pot without the earth, and if he be considered to be a general (*Sadharan*) cause, the world cannot arise of itself from Him even as the jar cannot of itself arise from the earth In two of the three cases, God, it would be evident, is reduced to the position of jar (something devoid of consciousness of intelligence) If the phenomenal world were God, God would be responsible for all sins, such as theft etc, which is absurd The substratum of the universe is therefore something different and eternal, and God is the maker or fashioneer of things, etc, of various forms and shapes The soul is also by its inherent nature eternal, and the gross world is phenomenally eternal, We cannot escape the conclusions

Now, as to the time when the world was created, Listen friends, We can reply to this question, but you cannot When you affirm that your systems of Faith came to exist only 1800, 1300, and 500 years back, these systems cannot throw any light on the question of the world's age The Aryas have been in possession of information on the point since the dawn of creation Remember that light was carried from this land to other countries—a fact which is proved by the histories of those countries Knowledge went from Aryavarta to Egypt from Egypt to Greece, from Greece to other countries of Europe and so, none but the Vedic religion can tell us how old, the world is The Aryas know from the verses, bearing on the creation and dissolution of the world, in the Shastras, that a thousand Chaturyugas, constituted one of Brahma, and as many yugas one night of Brahma A Brahma day covers the time from creation of the universe to its dissolution, and a Brahma Ratri from the dissolution of the world to its next creation, after a

thousand Chaturyugas. There are fourteen Manvantras in one Kalpa, and one Manvantra is equal to 91 Chaturyugas. The present is the Seventh Manvantra, the Swayambhuva, Svarochisha, Uttami, Tamasa Ravaata and Chakshusha having already expired in other words 1,960,852 976 years of the world's age have passed away, and 2,333,227,024 still remain. The histories of our country unanimously corroborate it, and the calculation is to be found in astronomical treatises, and changes are made in the same in accordance with the principle just enunciated. The year, as it passes diminishes the future age of the world, and increases the number of years already passed. All genuine histories of Aryavarta are at one on this point, and there is not the least disagreement among them.

When the Jains and the Muhammadans began to destroy the historical works etc., of the Aryas, the Aryas committed the chronological formula to memory, and they would repeat it daily, one and all, from an old man down to a child. The Sankalpa, describing the age of the world, runs as follows:

Om Tat Sat (i.e., he whose name is Om, is the true Lord) In the second division of the first half of the Day Shree Brahma, in the second foot of Kaliyuga of the 28th Varaswata, in such and such a part of the year, in such and such a season, palsh, divas, nakshatra, lagan muburt, this act is performed, and it shall continue to be daily performed, in future, by the eldest as well as the youngest member of the family.

This furnishes a system of calculation in connection with the age of the world. If any one doubts it, he should know that the mode of counting days, etc., set forth in the Sankalpa, is identical with that given in the astronomical works. No one can gainsay it. The system of entries in the cash book and ledger, which are made according to dates, cannot be questioned. If any one refuses to believe it, he should be called upon to state his belief on the subject, and if he says that the world was created six or seven or eight thousand years ago, and quotes his scriptures to support his assertion his statement we maintain, would be equally open to the charge (which, in ignorance, he brings forward against the Aryana Chronology). The science of Geology supports the conclusion already arrived at, viz., that the world is 1,960,852,976 years old.

The information which our religion is capable of giving on the point under discussion, is afforded by none else It is desirable that all should believe it to be true

As to why God created the world, we reply that the *Jiva* (soul) and the material cause of the Universe are eternal by nature, and the actions of individuals and the visible world are phenomenally eternal At the time of dissolution some actions of men remain unrewarded and unpunished, and it is with the object of meeting out to them rewards of their actions that God creates the world and dispenses impartial justice Further, the attributes of knowledge, power, mercy and creation, inherent in God, also call for their natural and legitimate exercise, and hence God creates the world Just as eyes are meant to see and ears to hear with, even so the creative power of the deity exists for creation God has created the world for the exercise of his powers, so that His creatures may benefit themselves by the innumerable things it contains He has blessed them with eyes, etc., for the attainment of *dharma*, *artha*, *kama* and *moksha* Similarly, there are many other reasons for the creation of the world, and they cannot be all set forth here in consequence of the time at my disposal being short The wise can think them out for themselves (Adapted)

An interesting discussion followed, in which every one claimed victory, though victory seemed to disclaim all On the whole the impression produced was very good

#### HIS VISIT TO THE PUNJAB

The year 1877 in which Swami Dayanand visited the Punjab for the first time, as a Missionary of Vedic religion, was a momentous one in the history of his eventful life In spite of his strenuous efforts to familiarise the people, with the doctrines of the Vedic religion, of Bombay and the United Provinces of Agra and Oudh, success worth the name did not seem to crown them But in the Punjab the case was quite different Within two months of his appearance in the 'Land of the Five Rivers,' the movement inaugurated by him touched and touched effectively all classes of the community The rich and the poor, the literate and the

illiterate, the atheistic and the agnostic, were one and all influenced by the Swamiji's teachings. His was a movement which aimed at the conservation of national energies for the advancement of his countrymen in all the departments of life. The Punjab, a country which was first sanctified by the early Aryan Rishis and which in troublesome times struggled for peace, which peace the sublime theism of Nanak, the founder of Sikhism, gave to the agitating minds of the Punjabees, was best suited for sowing the seeds of the Vedic religion. Undoubtedly in the salubrious climate of the Punjab, where the soil also was fertile, they did take deep roots and in spite of the storms and hurricanes the majestic trees have spread their branches far and wide and to day the Arya Samaj movement is a force to be reckoned with. The pioneers of the movement are ably conducting many schools, colleges, orphanages and girls' schools. The presiding genius of this body was Dayanand and the work of reform undertaken by him was taken up in right earnest by some of his sincere admirers. Swami Dayanand delivered several lectures on "Vedas," "Transmigration of Souls," and *Vedic Dharma*. The effect of these lectures was very wholesome and on the 26th of June 1877, a Samaj was established with some men of light and leading as members and office bearers. The original rules framed by the Bombay Samaj were revised, and the ten new rules were framed to which reference has already been made. Swami Dayanand then undertook long journeys, and visited several towns in the Punjab, as Mooltan, Garudaspur, Rawalpindi, Jhelum, Wazirabad and Guzerat. Wherever he went, he delivered lectures, held debates, and as a result thereof many Samajas were established.

In the year 1878, he left the Punjab for the United Provinces of Agra and Oudh and here too he followed the same programme. In the year 1879, he visited Bareilly and conducted a debate with missionaries. The subjects for discussion were (1) Transmigration of Souls, (2) Incarnation, and (3) the Forgiveness of Sin. Rev Mr T Scott upholding the last two and the Swami speaking for the first subject. At Meerut, in 1880, Pandita Rambai, Colonel Olcott and Madame Blavatsky paid visits to him. In the year 1881, a grand meeting of the orthodox Bengali Pandits was convened, in which Pandit Tarapathee Tarka Vachaspati Jewananda Vidyasagar, The Hon'ble Maharaja J M Tagore, CSI, and nearly 300 Pandits took part. But Swami Dayanand was not invited, and several questions were proposed and answered by the various members themselves.

#### HIS TOUR IN RAJPUTANA.

On the 10th of March 1881, his long tour in Rajputana commenced. He stayed for some time in Odeypore, where the Swami established the *Paropakarini Sabha*—(Benevolent Society)—and drew up a document which was signed by many 'Barons of the Odeypore Court'. This will has, in the main, fourteen articles which deal with the manner in which his property consisting of books, a printing press and some money given to him by nobles and kings of different States is to be disposed of —A few articles are copied below —

The society should protect me and my property and manage the property in a manner which should deal with benevolent purposes, viz, (a) The printing and the publishing of the Vedas and the books supplementary to their study (b) The preaching of Vedic religion by sending missionaries to different parts of the world. (c) The supporting and educating of orphans

(2) The Society should delegate one of its members to examine the accounts of the Vedic Press

(3) No disputes in connection with this will should be referred to Law Courts, but the members themselves should decide according to law. But should it be found impossible to decide the case at home, it may be referred to a Law Court

The other articles deal with the manner in which his property should be disposed of after his death, how the member are to be elected, and what other benevolent work it should carry on. This will was read and confirmed at the Court of the Maharana. Maharana Shri Sajana Singh, CSI of Mewar, became the President, and Lala Moolraj MA the Vice President. There were altogether 23 members, including the Maharaja of Shapura, Mahadeva Govind Ranade, R.B., then at Poona, and Raja Jai Krishen Dass, CSI, of Mooradabad. In one of the meetings, M G Ranade moved—"That in memory of Swami Dayanand, an Ashrama be established consisting of a library, an anglo Vedic college, a book depot, an orphanage, a museum, a press and a lecture hall". This motion was unanimously carried, and twenty four thousand rupees were collected on the spot. At present the Sabha owns movable and immovable property to the extent of one lakh and twenty five thousand rupees.

#### HIS ILLNESS AND DEATH

In the year 1883, he was still in the Native States of Rajputana. In response to an invitation sent by the Chief of Shabpur, he went there in the month of March 1883. He delivered many lectures there on Religion and Morality. Agniv Maharaja of Jodhpur invited him to visit his city in the month of May. Here he remained for four months and in the fifth month he suddenly fell ill but was removed to Ajmere for a change where, in spite of the best medical aid, his condition grew worse day by day and in the

last week of October, the malady took an alarming and a serious turn

A little more than an hour before his death, he raised himself in his bed and in that posture went into the contemplation of the Deity for some time. He then stretched himself on the bed and ordered every one present to retire behind him so that his mind might not be detracted by the sight of any and present. And when this was done, he began to sing praise to God in Hindi and recount His Attributes and Glory. After this he recited certain Vedic *Mantras*, especially the *Gayatri Mantra*, and at about 6 P.M. on the 30th of October 1883, when in Aryavarta the *Deepavali illuminations* were illuminating the dark fortnight of *Karthika*, the soul of that useful entity, passed away.

Gloom was cast all over the country and many shared the general grief caused by the most lamentable death of that Vedic Scholar, and a *Rishi* in more senses than one.

"Dayanand was a hero at all points." His was a remarkable personality. Men who have carefully observed him in his private life, men who knew him intimately and even some of his adversaries describe him as one possessing a spotless and an unexceptionable character. Harmonious development of his body, mind, and soul indicates what and *adintya brahmachari* is capable of doing and achieving. For the sake of intellectual development, he did not neglect his body. If his body was strong and healthy, his intellect was bright, fine and gigantic. If his frame was well knit and muscular, his reasoning faculties were developed to perfection. His memory was remarkably strong. A writer in the *Vedic Magazine* describes him in following terms—

His prepossessing appearance made up of a well regulated and rather fair face, which was crowned by an extremely intellectual head and forehead, beneath which shone a pair of black orbs, at times shooting fire of bell and then relapsing into a dreamy repose and of a tall and erect figure over six feet in height. His fine speaking and debating powers, the native greatness of which had

been ripened by a prolonged exercise in dialectic fencing with the monks, his profound scholarship in Sanskrit literature and metaphysics his flexible but powerful voice which could be modulated to varying pitch, which changed tone as the speaker passed from serious to gay and which served its master alike well in creating among the audience the feelings of sorrow, shame, ridicule, laughter and anger.

The curl of his lips, the turn of his nose, the brightness of his features, the nobleness of his bearing, the symmetry of his body which appeared to full advantage for want of a covering and, above all, the merry peal of his laughter diffused radiance over his face and carried home to a bystander's mind the perfect innocence and stainless life of its possessor. He was a great lover of Truth. No earthly power could induce him to change his opinions which he once formed after mature deliberation. Social environments often tempt a man to accommodate his convictions to the wishes of others. A tender regard for the feelings of friends and relatives many a time drives one to do an act which one's heart and brain would not applaud. Dayanand was not in the least afraid of wounding the susceptibilities of other men. Once in Bareilly, in a crowded meeting in the presence of high British officials, he condemned certain dogmas of Christianity and Hinduism as well. The next day when he was told that Government would no longer tolerate such blasphemous denunciations of popular dogmas, he is reported to have said, "Ah me! even if the rulers of the three worlds were to be offended with me for speaking the truth, I do not mind it much. No power on earth can do any harm to my soul. The most that can be done is to inflict some pain on this physical body."

The average man is a greedy inspirer after fame. He strains every nerve to win popularity and to lead men. Organisers of societies desire that they should be deified and honoured as "Presidents and Founders," but in spite of Dayanand being an inspirer of the Arya Samaj movement, when he was offered the Presidentship of the premier Samaj in the Punjab, he declined the offer and was content with being merely enlisted as an ordinary member.

He detested hypocrisy and hated abuses. He was righteously indignant but never meanly insulting. He preached self-sacrifice and self-help.

and practised self abnegation. He was an intellectual marksman and his ideas flew like an unerring arrow straight to the heart. He never forced his beliefs upon others. His sturdy optimism, his untiring zeal, his unconquerable will, and his laborious search after truth, have been only equalled by his inflexible integrity, his indomitable courage and a rare simplicity of character. His sole end and aim in life had been to revive the Vedic religion, and to achieve that end he sacrificed all his worldly prospects. To endeavour to solve the problems of life and death, he underwent all sorts of miseries and privations, and in his glorious attempts to establish the kingdom of righteousness on earth, he fell a victim to the treacheries of imaginative gossips and idlers. He never sat at the feet of a Mazzini or a Garibaldi, but drew his inspiration from Kapila and Kanada. There are some who believe that Dayanand was a revolutionary, but let it be remembered that it was a Sannyasi, a hermit, an ascetic, a Yogi Swami Virajanand—that fired him with enthusiasm to hoist the flag of 'Om' once more in the land of the Vedas. After name and fame he hankered not, for self and power he cared not. A Rishi who peremptorily refused to accept the Mahants' ship could never think of gaining Empires and founding Kingdoms'. An ascetic who blessed those that cursed him could never harbour feelings of enmity towards foreigners. A profound Vedic scholar, whose whole lifetime was engaged in studying and writing out commentaries on the Vedas, could never degrade himself by incorporating objectionable matter in them. How could a revivalist, who sincerely believed that the Vedas were revealed by God in the beginning of creation for the benefit of the whole human race, raise the cry "India for Aryans"? He

renounced all the joys and comforts of home early in life to solve great problems of life he worked day and night without rest or repose for the cause of *Dharma*

#### DAYANAND AS A SOCIAL REFORMER

A close and critical study of the Vedic Literature, a thorough grasp of the principles of sociology enunciated in the *Smritis*, and an intelligent reading of the *Daishanas* convinced him that India had a glorious past. When he once realised that religion formed the basis upon which the ancient civilization and the social organisation of the Aryan race rested, he strongly felt that even under the present changed conditions of life, religious revival was capable of working out the salvation of the descendants of that race. Many of the reforms, therefore, advocated by him are on 'Shastric lines' which are however ultimately rationalistic as well. He held that whatever is irrational is un Shastric, and whatever is Shastric need not necessarily be irrational. To him "reform was revival and revival was reform". To carry on the great work of reform and the more difficult work of revival, he had at first to study carefully all the individual and national weakness of the Hindu Society. The evils of caste system, the miserable condition of women, the physical, the mental, and the moral deterioration of the younger generation, the observance of meaningless ceremonials, the dethronement of ideals by idols, and, above all, the slow but sure decay of the Hindu race resulting from constant conversions to alien faiths, were some of the national and individual weaknesses which first attracted his attention. His views on some of the burning topics of the day have a ring of earnestness and practicability about them. As far as the caste system is concerned, he suggests that there ought to be only

four divisions, *viz.*, (1) the Brahmin, (2) the Kshatriya, (3) the Vaishya, and (4) the Shudra. These are the only four *Varnas* which are dependent on merits (Guna, Karma and Swabhava) and not necessarily on birth.

#### MARRIAGE REFORMS

Early marriages are condemned even by Shastras, is what he holds. On the question of age, he is very definite. He says —

The best time for a girl's marriage is when she is from 16 to 24 years of age and for a youth when he is 25 to 48 years of age. The marriage of a girl of 16 and a youth of 25 is of the lowest order of a girl of 18 or 20 years and a youth of 30, 35 or 40 years is of the middle order, and of a maid of 24 and a bachelor of 48 is of the best kind.

In support of post puberty marriages, he quotes authorities from Manu, the great Law-giver, and from Dhanwantry, the great physician, and says —

The impregnation of a woman less than 16 years of age by a man less than 25 years of age is subject to misfortune. Even if the child be born, it will never be healthy. So, the conception of a minor should never be encouraged.

He was of opinion,

that the system of early marriage is responsible for the physical deterioration of the Hindu race, and he contrasts the state of Aryavarta before the introduction of this baneful system with that of the one existing after its introduction.

His views on the question of re-marriage are as follows —

Men and women whose marriage ceremony *only* is performed and who have had no sexual intercourse should marry again in case one of the party happen to die. Men and women of the Dwija class who have had conjugal intercourse should not marry again after the death of their consorts. Men and women should lead a chaste life and on the failure of issue, they should adopt a son in order to continue the line of descent. If they cannot keep up their chastity, they can beget children by the Niyoga form of marriage (temporary nuptial contract).

This system of Niyoga, however, is adversely commented upon by friends and foes of

Dayanand, and there are men even among his own admirers who consider it "an anomalous practice"

#### FOREIGN TRAVEL

In ancient times, he believed that men from Aryavarta did visit foreign countries cross the oceans and had free intercourse with men living in the distant Patala (America). He in support of this statement states that Shree Krishna and Arjuna went to America to bring sage Uddalaka to the sacrifice performed by Yudhishtira Dhritarashtra was married to the princess of Kandhabhar (Gandhari) Madri, the wife of Paadu was the daughter of a King of Iran (Persia) Arjuna was married to Ulopi, the daughter of a ruler of a State in America His remarks give ample food for reflection —

The people of Aryavarta did undertake journeys to foreign countries for purposes of commerce and with a view to settle disputes on international affairs. The present dread of the destruction of purity and religion are due to ignorance. By paying visits to foreign countries one learns much about the manners and customs of people inhabiting those regions. There is neither pollution nor sin in learning virtues from others. When we do good work and travel in distant countries no sin is committed. Can there be any progress in a country without travelling in and trading with foreign countries? Poverty and misery will fall to the lot of the people who are like Koopamondolas. Ignorance and super-titition are responsible for the loss of our independence, wealth ease and happiness.

He never favours the idea of Shudras and females being debarred from the study of the Vedas or the acquisition of knowledge. He quotes a verse from the Yajurveda which says —

We have revealed the Vedas for the benefit of Brahmans, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas, Shudras, servants and women as well

Quoting another verse from the Atharva Veda, he observes

Let girls also acquire knowledge and study the Vedas and after having attained puberty marry youthful, handsome and educated young men

### ON THE QUESTION OF FOOD

He was himself a strict vegetarian and recommends also a vegetarian diet. Both on economical and physiological grounds he condemns meat eating. *Ahimsa* is the first virtue, he says, to be possessed by an aspirant after *mokti*. He quotes shlokas from Smritis to show that the killing of animals for the sake of food is a great sin.

### DAYANAND AS AN EDUCATIONIST

Dayanand was driving a lonely furrow in the field of pedagogy when he preached that the *gurukula* system of education was the one that was best suited to the needs of the country. When he placed his ideals of education before his countrymen, he vehemently declared that the basal rock upon which the superstructure of physical culture can be raised is *Brahmacharya* and *Brahma charya* alone. In order to shield the children from the evil and pernicious influences of city life, he suggested that the schools should be situated at considerable distances from the hubbub of busy town life. He was also of opinion that the work of educating the children should be entrusted to *Dharmic*, learned, self sacrificing and disinterested persons who were in the *Vanaprastha Ashrama*. He says —

Boys and girls, when they attain the age of eight years, should be sent to their respective schools. The seminaries should be situated in sequestered places. Schools should not be nearer than five miles to a town or a village. The *Brahma charins* and *Brahmcharinees* should not be allowed to hold any communication with their parents.

Following Manu, the great Aryan Law giver, Dayanand suggests that the first essential factor of the ancient system of education in India was the imparting of *free* and *compulsory* education for a period of at least 18 years to boys, and 10

years for girls Translating a Shloka from Manu, he says —

Both State and society should make it compulsory to send their children to schools after the 5th or the 8th year. It should be a penal offence to keep a child at home after that age.

He considers that manual training constitutes a fundamental part of the education of boys. In the *gurulila*, all artificial distinctions of the rich and the poor, a Brahmin and a Shudra, a prince and peasant, ought to be levelled up. In order to produce the highest type of a socialised and civilized individual and in order to unfold all the mental, moral and spiritual faculties latent in boys, he believes that all scholars should be treated alike. Be they princes and princesses or the children of beggars, all should practise ascetism. By the increase of bodily strength and activity, the intellect becomes so subtle that it can easily grasp the most abstruse and profound subjects. It also helps to preserve and perfect the reproductive element in the human body, which in its turn produces self control, firmness of mind, energy and acuteness of intellect.

The *Acharyas*, the *Gurus*, the preceptors or the tutors ought to be in *loco parentis* to the Brahmacharies, and these teachers are to scrupulously guard the boys at all times from temptations to which any one of them might yield. Moral and religious education also forms an important factor in the system of education advocated by Dayanand.

He never wanted that the study of the English language should be neglected. He says —

First study the works bequeathed to you by your Rishis, digest their philosophy, assimilate their thoughts, and then supplement such a kind of Oriental learning with the Occidental knowledge. Do not neglect the study of English as it is the *Raja Bhasha*.

This was the gist of his educational policy. In order to obviate the schismatic and severing tendency of modern education, efficient study of the national language and literature is an

indispensable necessity, and this necessity was fully realised by Dayanand long ago To day, the Dayanand-Anglo Vedic College at Lahore, many Vedic schools scattered all over the Punjab, the Kanya Mahavidyalaya at Jallandur, and above all, the Gurukul at Haridwar, are trying in their own way to approach the magnificent ideal placed by Dayanand before his countrymen

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# SWAMI RAM TIRATH

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## INTRODUCTORY

FROM the heart of the people of this country once did rise prayers breathing peace for the whole universe It was when they were tired of war and conquest, it was when the warrior race came home and saw that they had sold their soul for a mess of pottage—earthly empire When the Aryan mind found that battles won were really the battles lost, it turned inward The spirit of renunciation completely vanquished the spirit of conquest in them Peace and Love spread over the land and made it the holy land of the neighbouring races From that time on, that page of Indian history has been considered blank where the life of renunciation is absent In India, the ideal is not to measure success by the amount of gold one can manage to accumulate, nor even by the amount of knowledge one toils to store, nor by rank, nor by position, but only by the amount of self knowledge and self culture Man is to be judged not by his other circumstances but by his inner experiences It is the inner man only that is held worshipful The silent inner life of the sage though by no means eventful to outward seeming, reflected as it is from moment to moment in a smiling profile, kind look, generous heart and tranquil mind is, in fact, the only true life whose evolution mankind ought to study The story of such a life would consist in recounting the inner experiences of the saint in the form of his thoughts and teachings and still more in depicting the saint himself with his mystery opening smiles and glances Swami Rama's biography is

that of the inner man It is but the silent evolution of his mind, emerging from the world of matter by slow processes of self realisation and entering into the domain of spirit

Swami Rama's life is a roral hymn set in the tunes of the prairie and the jungle, singing of universal peace and love It is the same note that had its birth in the glorious *Upanishads* Nothing new about it but the singing of it, Swami Rama raised it once again from the bottom of his soul and he poured it forth in noble strains calling man from discord to harmony, from difference to agreement in difference, from self to self in all, from diversity to unity in diversity He called man from hatred to love, from war to peace From him do flow goodwill to all and charity of thought and feeling He was a poet of the inner man and the inner nature To him all men and things were divine "Tattvamasi,"—"Thou art That," "Ekameva-dvitiyam,"—One without a Second," these two *mantis* may be said to be the two golden wings balanced on which this ethereal *Hansa* soared every hour of his life into eternal blue and soaring ever soared further and further till he was lost in Infinity

#### HIS BIRTH AND PERSONALITY

Swami Rama was born in 1873 at Muraliwala, a small village in the District of Gujranwala, Punjab He was born in a poor Brahman family It is said that the Goswami Brahmans of Muraliwala are the direct descendants of Goswami Tulasi Das the famous author of the Hindi Ramayana His father Goswami Hirananda had no means of livelihood except what the spiritual tours undertaken by him to Peshawar and Swat brought him He

was the family Guru of the Hindus of the North Western Frontier Province Goswami Hirananda had to go to his disciples on ministering tours from time to time Swami Rama's mother died a few days after his birth He was brought up on cow's milk It may be remarked here that though a Panjabee, Swami Rama's staple diet was milk and rice He was very fond of milk and he could drink about 5 seers of it at a time Swami Rama was thus born under the lowly roof of a poor Brahman family He became a student at the age of five His childhood and boyhood passed in hard study As he reached the higher classes, his father was not able to support him, and as a student he lived in extreme poverty The dress of the boy Rama consisted of a shirt, a pair of Panjabee trousers and a small turban, each made of a cheap and very coarse country cloth, the entire outfit costing about Rs 3 His fellow students relate that at times, he would forego his meals for the oil of his mid night lamp in his College days Many a time he had to starve for days together without, however, showing the smallest sign of suffering or sorrow on his face, for he attended College regularly with a calm and peaceful appearance and kept to his studies as usual

He had a soft handsome face of a typical Aryan cut The eye brows arched over deep black eyes, which showed the mystery and love of his soul In contrast with a big, broad prominent forehead, showing high intellectual power there was feminine softness round his lips When he was serious, the lower lip pressed against the upper on a small round chin, which betokened indomitable strength of will As a College boy he seemed to give no promise of his remarkable after career, but whosoever saw him even then, was impressed with his

angelic nature and with a purity and innocence of life rarely met with. He was bashful like a modest girl. Living as he did in the light of love, he looked transparently pure through his small, frail, fair coloured body. But under this unassuming humble appearance there lay hid a remarkable man with some lofty aspirations and noble aims, which the Brahman boy thought too sacred to be uttered. With tears in his eyes, with the humility of a disciple in his heart, with the silence of a maiden and with the will of a conqueror, this angelic student was toiling like a soldier day and night in the temple of knowledge. He was always ahead of his fellows. His studies were vast. The amount of knowledge and information on literary and philosophic subjects that he commanded as a Swami was marvellous. It seemed as if he was acquainted with the whole range of human thought.

At the age of about twenty, he became an M.A. in Mathematics. After that, for four years he served in different capacities as a Professor and Lecturer. At the end of the year 1899, after a year of his leaving Lahore for the forests, he became a Sannyasin. His marvellous store of knowledge was thus gathered by him in the short space of 26 years. Not a minute that passed could go without paying toll to Swami Rama. Besides passing the University Examinations with great credit and securing high places and scholarships he had become at home with the writings of Hafiz, Maulana Rumi, Maghrabi, Omar Khayam and other Sufi masters of Persia. He had waded through all the literature on Philosophy both Eastern and Western. He had finished many readings of the Upanishads in his College days. He was enamoured of the beauties and sweetness of Hindi, Urdu and Punjabis poets.

The rigour of circumstances and intense work had told on his health. When he came out as an M.A. everybody wondered how life could suffer to remain linked to the skeleton of the body which he carried about. There was hardly any flesh on his bones. His head rested on a thin, bony, cranny neck. His voice was then hoarse and he could hardly speak properly. He was so weak physically. But he resolved to acquire a strong body. By putting himself through a regular course of physical exercise and large draughts of milk he recovered his health within a short time. He delighted in designing new methods of physical exercise. Ever since then, he could never forego his daily exercise. He was seen, even a few minutes before his death, taking as was his wont, his physical exercise. Thus out of a thin and frail body, he managed to emerge a strong man of stagelike nimble activity. He was a great and swift walker. He could walk more than 40 miles a day as a Swami in the Himalayan Hills. He won in America a 10 miles race, which he ran for fun with some American soldiers and came two hours ahead of them. Once as he was walking fast in the San Francisco streets he who accosted by an American with the remark that he walked as if the land belonged to him "Yes" said Swami Rama smilingly and walked away. He scaled Gangotri, Jumnotri and Badrinath peaks clad in a small strip of loin cloth and a blanket. He crossed from Jumnotri to Gangotri through glaciers. He lived in snows and slept in thick dreary jungles all alone. The mountain people whom the writer has met and talked with believed the Swami to be a *Dacia*, so strong that he would ferry their cattle from the opposite bank to this side of their village across a swift hill torrent in rainy season.

At midnight, he would leave his *Asana* and go roaming in the dark jungles defying fear and death Those that have seen him as a starving youth of an extremely frail body when he was a student at Lahore, could possibly recognise that swan-white, emaciated face in this wild man of the woods, so fearless, so bold, so vehement, so strong and so roseate His face was now full, beautifully tinted and his eyes half closed with divine intoxication With all this exuberance of physical and spiritual energy, Swami Rama presented to the world the master piece of his life work, namely, his own personality

Swami Rama's personality may be described as explosive He would remain silent for months together as if he had nothing to say He remained merged in joy All of a sudden, he will burst out like a volcano and give out his thoughts in a wild manner Whenever he spoke or wrote, one could be sure of setting something very refreshing and original It seems he could not remain long in society without feeling some kind of loss which entailed weariness of soul to him He would attribute all his little ailments to the "business talks" of men of worldly wisdom that at times gathered around him He protested against all advice of worldly wisdom He used to run back to the mountainous solitudes to recover himself There he would keep peace with running waters, and glorious sky, and would lie on rocks for hours with his eyes closed and his body thrown in the sunlight The movements of the roving winds charmed him He found something more in Nature than our common eyes can see He was a poet philosopher of Nature who could not live without its myriad glories Not only in India but also when he was in America, he passed most of his time in the breezy lap of mountains He could not

stand the noisy streets of trams, motors and omnibuses

It is true that one who loves Nature and enters deep into it through the taste and feelings of poetry, cannot but in some mysterious way reflect its soul in himself. When Swami Rama first came down from the Himalayan glaciers and descended via Bhim Tal on the plains at Lucknow he was photographed. This photo reminds us of the snows, their purity and their transparency. There is something in his expression, in the soft halo of his body which reflects the *grandeur* of Nature. He brought with himself, it seems, ever the delicate refreshment of the mountain breezes. The peculiar realisation of the Nature soul was one of the secrets of his charming personality. To see him was to see some beautiful scene of Nature. He was an impersonal person. In him the diffused beauty of Nature was so much concentrated in shape that his sight gave a new significance to the stature of the mountain and the pine, to the rustling river, to the green moss, and to everything that is beautiful and fair in God's forest and skies. Swami Rama wore a delicate bloom acquired by his constant companionship with Nature and it was, therefore, that he would prefer solitude to society, to keep his coat of light unsoiled.

Swami Rama's highly cultivated emotion formed another attractive feature of his personality. He was verily a man of tears. As a floating pregnant cloud at the touch of a cold breeze melts down in drizzling rain, so did always Swami Rama melt in tears whenever the thoughts of the day required such a fertiliser. He would pour forth floods of them. There was a roll of seasons in his mind. There was summer, autumn, winter and spring. Of these the rainy season was of the longest duration, the next in

length was spring and autumn and summer came last From his eyes trickled all sorts of tears, of Brahm Anand, tears of sad emotions, tears at the decay of those who were once good and great, tears of a lover and tears of a beloved Deep sincerity rained down from his eyes in abundance His sweetnes was irresistible Muhammadans and Hindus loved him alike The people of different races could see and recognise in Swami Rama some family likeness with themselves The Americans called him an American, the Japanese called him a Japanese, and the Persians saw a Persian in him The wonderful realisation of the *Man soul* made him look like the one who happened to be looking at him

Closely connected with his sincere emotion was his state of semi madness He was so inebriated with his meditations of the divine infinity in which, according to him, the Nature soul and the Man soul were one and the same, that at times he seemed mad, his eyes became red, rolling in wild frenzy and his whole frame shook with terrible earnestness

I saw a vision once, and it sometimes re appears  
I know not if'twas real, for they said I was not well;  
But often as the sun goes down my eyes fill up  
with tears

And then that vision comes, and I see my *Floribel*  
The day was going softly down, the breeze had  
died away

The waters from the far West came slowly rolling on,  
The sky, the clouds, the ocean wave, one molten  
glory lay,

All kindled into crimson by the deep red Sun  
As silently I stood and gazed before the glory passed,  
There rose a sad remembrance of days long gone,  
My youth, my childhood came again, my mind was  
over cast

As I gazed upon the going down of that red Sun  
The past upon my spirit rushed, the dead were  
standing near

Their cheeks were warm again with life, their winding  
sheets were gone

Their voices rang, like marriage bells once upon  
my ear

Their eyes were gazing there with mine on that  
red Sun

Many days have passed since then, many chequered  
years,

I have wandered far and wide still I fear I am not well,  
For often as the Sun goes down my eyes fill up  
with tears,

And then that vision comes, and I see my Floribel

To see Swami Rama was to feel inspired  
with new ideals, new powers, new visions and  
new emotions He might not have spoken but  
his smiles and his looks would open a new chapter  
of your consciousness Besides having a smiling  
profile, he would, at times, get into convulsive  
fits of laughter His laughter rang like the  
chiming of bells It was the spontaneous gaiety  
of a natural Man It was the bubbling of the  
foundations of joy that had welled up in him  
He was always merry like birds Never a  
frown or a scowl darkened his eye brows The  
writer was a witness of the marvellous effects  
of his laughter on some kinds of men Men  
would come and he would greet them with  
nothing but peal after peal of ringing  
laughter and what would happen? They would  
immediately bow down to him, confess their  
inmost guilt and seek protection from sin and  
darkness, It seems his peals of laughter went  
searching and touching the inmost secrets of  
these people's hearts and they had to confess  
themselves before him feeling that his laughter  
is that of the man who knows and understands  
their inmost history.

He was cheerful but as he used to say  
"never enter into *Rajas* through cheerfulness,"  
his cheerfulness was fed on tears He always

touched his joy with burning rods of wisdom so that his happiness may never get adulterated with *Rajas*. In the midst of his laughter, he would suddenly become mute, shut his eyes and begin to chant in the most solemn tones the sacred syllable "Om". His cheerfulness was the joy of *jnanam*, it was the supreme bliss of having seen the self same divine soul in everything and in himself. He used to say "I am a storm of peace, I am a tempest of joy"

His philosophic melancholy at the unanswerable eternal questions of "where," "whence," and "why" of the universe, the melancholy that falls to the share of all great thinkers and men of great earnestness and sincerity, ending in mere peals of laughter at the shows of the world, gave to many a person, though not in words, nor perhaps in thoughts, nor even in belief, yet in some other way, the only suitable reply that men of his consciousness had given before him, the only reply that the human mind could give it appears that when one thoroughly understands the reality of this seeming world, he cannot but burst out in an unceasing laughter and then never be able to suppress it —

I laugh and laugh  
At Destiny scoff  
I thrill creation's aura  
My ocean of wonder  
Breaks forth in thunder'  
Hallelujah!! Hallelujah!!

*Swami Rama*

Another feature which contributed to the charm of his very presence was his bold independence of thought, his great towering intellect. Whatever he taught, he had not only thought upon, but he had actually seen its working in his own life. He used to say that he believed in experimental

*religion* According to him the art of living consists in *luminous belief* Theology has very little to do with the inner religion of the living man If you are a living man, test the truth by trusting your life to it Just as in science, authority has little weight in arriving at truth, so in religion, authority should have little or no weight and religious truth bearing on the nature of the inner man must be everybody's own and personal property through self realisation This realisation may be got by whatsoever method, the method is of no consequence, because there is no royal road to realisation nor is it possible to make one One must take his own path and persevere in it to the end The so called guidance given by codes only incapacitates humanity Vedas or no Vedas, Quran or no Quran, Bible or no Bible, the man's own inner experiences are the final test of truth We have nothing to do with the light of the sun when during the night it is not available, our poor candle is enough to light the path It is the inner experiences of one's own self that lead to the understanding of the laws of life and all those writings of saints that clash with life itself must finally go to the walls True education sometimes comes home to a man not through books, not through authority dead or living, but through the rugged life even of a thief or a robber, even of a courtesan and of a galley-slave Every one must go to God through the failures and successes of his own life *Life itself is the greatest revelation*

He used to say the great mistake of the great Shankara was that he hid his own light under a bushel He preached matters of his own direct realisation in the name of the Vedas and thus deprived the Hindu race of a direct and deep understanding of truth Better than

Shankara in this respect was Mahomed, who proclaimed the truth on the authority of his own realisation and succeeded in making the wild Arabs men of faith We need not preach truth on authority, for them the preaching of it loses all the force, the only force that can be given to it, viz of one's own direct and personal realisation Books are meant for man, but the dictators have now placed man at the mercy of books Religious books have to be read like the literature on Botany and Chemistry, but life is to be understood by each one for himself

Swami Rama had so laid the foundations of his thinking faculty on his own realisation of the truth of life that his pencil could cross many a great book as small and could sign many a small book as great It was a pleasure to hear from him occasional talks reviewing men and books Unfortunately they have not been reported but those who listened to such discourses of his, know the profundity and depth of his critical faculty with its sympathetic taste

Swami Rama was very courteous and polite His perfect manners one can never forget His reverence for man and woman was of the highest order He would gild the brow of the meanest sinner with the light of Shiva's forehead Everything was divine His manners were the outcome of his worship He worshipped man as God incarnate and so he worshipped rocks and trees The meanest sinner was to him as good as the highest saint, for he was the worshipper of both Mother is always sacred His manners, therefore, were acts of worship This form of man worship or the worship of the embodied Brahman, he considered to be the essential counterpart of the worship of the Unmanifested His idolatry consisted in loving man God worship may or may

not eradicate evil tendencies of the mind, but worship of man, as God is bound to clear the mists

He was on the whole an unostentatious, quiet thinker, who was always lost in his reveries. Whenever he spoke, he found himself unable to give utterance to his thoughts. In his speeches, he has, as it were, laid out a forest, and one thinks that there is much of the uninteresting in them, but now and then the majestic scenes of towering cryptogams and pines, snows and water falls burst upon one's view almost by surprise, and it is then that one knows the man. It is only then when these majestic ideals spontaneously grow in these speeches and writings that one feels amply rewarded for having had to wade through so much grass and dry pebbles, which afterwards assume a beauty of their own.

He had a message for the people and he has tried to convey it in the three large volumes of lectures and essays, published by Lala Amir Chand of Delhi. Excepting a few essays that were published in his life time, the rest purport to be shorthand reports of his speeches, delivered mostly in America. One can see the man Swami Rama through these works of his which he never intended to publish, being as they are mostly home talks.

He was an eloquent man. In the middle of the discourse he would enter deep into the spirit of his saying and become silent for minutes, with tears trickling down from his closed eyes. Such an attitude always led the whole of the audience into the spirit of his thoughts. A wonderful orator, who at the climax of his oration would sleep in the Divine and also lull his audience into a slumber. When he woke, his eloquence would end in shrieks and cries. Has

he spoken in the wilderness? May be, but he poured his whole soul into the cry

### SWAMI RAMA IN JAPAN

Swami Rama after spending two years in the Himalayas, came down to the plains burning with the missionary zeal of scattering the joy that he had found in himself. He sailed for Japan from Calcutta in the year 1903. One day the Raja of Tehri came to the Swami with the news that there was to be a Parliament of Religions, a world-meeting to be held in Tokyo, just as they had one in 1893, in Chicago. It was in 1902. And the Raja said that according to the dates given, the Swami could reach Tokyo in time, if he were to start immediately and catch the first steamer going Eastward. Swami got ready and in about a week's time he was on board bound for Japan.

As he entered Japan, he said —

Rama has nothing to teach these people. They are all Vedantins. They are all Ramas, how cheerful, how happy, how quiet, how labourious. This is all that Rama calls life.

But there was no Parliament of Religions in Tokyo. It was a false rumour. When, however, the Swami found that there was no such meeting, he laughed heartily and said, "With what a beautiful trick, Nature has led Rama out into the world from his lonely Himalayan resort. How a false piece of news becomes so fertile! Rama in himself is a whole Parliament of Religions. If Tokyo is not having one, let it not, Rama will hold one."

He was only for about a fortnight in Japan. He was invited twice to speak to Japanese audiences. He spoke in English and even those who did not understand the language felt and remarked that the words of this yellow robed Sannyasin were like sparks of fire shot out of

a red conflagration, as the Swami in his fire-coloured robe seemed to them like a ball of fire A Christian paper of Tokyo spoke in high terms about his personality and announced him as the "enthusiastic apostle of Vedanta"

One evening, as he was walking with some of the Indian students then residing in Tokyo, he halted at a cross road in the midst of an animated conversation, and cried out "Oh! the whole world will be converted, the flag of truth will conquer"

On meeting Swami Rama for the first time Dr Takakusu, Professor of Sanskrit and Eastern Philosophy in the Tokyo Imperial University said to the writer that though he had many an opportunity to see Indian Sadhus and Pandits at Professor Max Muller's in England and also at other places in Germany, yet he had seen no man like Swami Rama He was the perfect embodiment of the Vedanta Philosophy Mr Kinza Hirai, the famous Professor of Tokyo, who was the eloquent representative of Buddhism in the Chicago Parliament of Religions, was reminded of the Buddhistic period of Indian history of which he had read such vivid descriptions in Japanese and Chinese scriptures, when he conversed with Swami Rama Mr Hirai always remembered him after he had gone away to America as the "truly inspired Rama"

#### IN AMERICA

Swami Rama left Japan in November 1908 for San Francisco He had no money and no luggage with him As the steamer reached the harbour, when every one was hurrying about Swami Rama was standing without any anxiety to land or to stay on board An American gentleman noticing this strange luminous figure so quaintly dressed in orange and so unperturbed

when everybody else was bustling about approached him and asked him a series of questions

Where is your luggage?  
 Rama keeps as much as he can carry himself  
 Have you any money?  
 No, Rama keeps no money  
 Are you landing here then?  
 Yes  
 You must have some friends to help you  
 Yes there is one  
 Who is he?

Rama touched the shoulder of the questioner and softly said "You"

This "you" had an electric influence on the questioner and it was the latter who befriended Swami Rama, and looked to his physical needs while in America

Later this gentleman wrote of the Swami "He is a torch of knowledge hurling from the Himalayas The fire can burn him not, the steel can cut him not Tears of ecstasy roll down his eyes and his very presence gives new life"

Once again when he was similarly questioned by some other man he said, "I live in tune with the inner man I find there is some one to feed me when I am hungry and some one to give me water when I am thirsty, I need nothing more I never had any difficulty"

An old American lady went to see Swami Rama in a private interview\* and recited her tale of domestic trouble to the Swami, and wept for hours before him, as he sat cross legged with his eyes closed She took him to be uncivil, for not a word of sympathy escaped his lips and not a kind look gleamed from his eyes in response to her mournful tale The Swami sat before her

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\* Mrs Wellman—this lady met the writer in India and gave him her whole story

listening, yet not seeming to listen, like a stone statue "These Indians so impudent and proud" As the lady completed her story of woe, the Swami opened his eyes, looked at her with his eyes, looked at her with his red insane eyes and said "Mother," and then chanted his favourite Vedic Mantram 'Om! Om!' She said to me that there burst from his eyes upon her the strange dawn of a new consciousness "I seemed to have been lifted," said she "from the earth, I swam in air as a figure of light, and I felt myself the mother of the Universe All countries were mine, all nations were my children I was so filled with joy that I must visit India, I must see where Swami was born and bred I must go So I came My joy never fails me Oh! the word 'mother'—it lifts me up to the Divine I would fain touch his feet I would fain lie dead in the ecstasy that he gave me Some springs of nectar within me have burst up, the crust is broken and I am holy"

At a lake resort in America the Swami lived chanting 'OM,' and his presence gave heart to many a weary patient who came there for sanatorium treatment, and many got their health back from him "A healer" they called him

In San Francisco, when he said "I am God," tears of bliss trickled down his closed eyes, his face sparkled, and his arms vibrated with passion to hold the very universe in his embrace This emotion assuredly is not of any philosopher This passion was of a Vaishnava Bhakta In early days, he seldom spoke in public without shedding tears at the very name of Krishna for hours He beheld Him on the Kadamb tree and heard his flute ringing in his ears, while bathing in the Ganges at Hardwar. In his house at Lahore, he read *Sri Sagas*, with

the glorious passion that brought him the vision of Krishna after which he swooned away Seeing a serpent with upspread hood in his room that very day after the swoon, he beheld Krishna dancing on its hood He told the writer that for days and nights he wept in love of Krishna, and his wife saw in the morning that his pillow was wet with tears

I woke to find my pillow wet  
 With tears for deeds deep hid in sleep,  
 I knew no sorrow here, but yet  
 The tears fell softly through the deep,

—A E

Swami Rama was for about two years in America Most of this time, he lived in solitude There he lived a simple life, carrying his own fuel on his head from the forest The people of California were struck by the indifference with which he treated the eulogies on his work and life and threw hundreds of newspaper cuttings into the Sacramento river for its information He made a lasting impression on the Americans, but the detailed account of his work in America cannot be summed up here

Once he lectured in one of the California Universities and it was said that in that lecture he brought out a new chapter of history in tracing out how ancient Indian thought was and influenced the higher thought of Europe and America It was proposed to confer an Honorary Doctorate on him, which he declined, but the University students honoured him by giving him a *University yell*

#### BACK TO INDIA

On his way back to India he visited Egypt and lectured in Persia in one of the largest mosques before a Mahomedan audience Wherever he went he made friends among different sects

and creeds, friends who could never forget him, now, who still cherish his memory with respect

On return to his native home in the year 1905, he brought two ideas with him (1) *The need of organisation in every department and activity of life* and (2) *the need for united work*. These two points he elaborated in a series of lectures given at different places in the United Provinces

At Mathura, on his return from America, one morning, as the Pharisees around him pleaded for a new organisation in India to work out his ideas on nation building, he shut his eyes in an ecstasy of love, spread his arms trembling with love in token of a loving embrace, as he said

I shall shower oceans of love,  
And bathe the world in joy,  
If any oppose, welcome, come'  
For I shall shower oceans of love,  
All societies are mine, welcome, come,  
For I shall pour out floods of love

And he continued

' Tell them, I embrace all I exclude none  
I am love Love like light embraces every thing  
with joy and its own splendour Verily I am  
nothing but the flood and glory of love I love  
all equally "

At one of the meetings in Benares, one of the Benares Pundits remarked that Swami Rama could not be an Acharya of Vedanta without being a master of Sanskrit literature. It seems after that Swami Rama took seriously to the study of Sanskrit. He began to live at Byas Ashram near Rishikesh and got Ashtadhyai by memory in a few months. He then went through Ramayana and Mahabharata and then he began to study the Vedas in right earnest. The Pundits

that met him and heard him at Vasishta Ashram, very near Kedarnath in the Himalayas, were wonderstruck with the insight that Swami showed in interpreting Vedic Mantras. He was busy reading them and picking out the Mantras which he thought to be beautiful. At Vasishta Ashram, the Vedas formed the subject of talks. The present writer questioning him on the subject of Swami Dayanand's interpretation of the Vedas which seeks to find all truths of the physical science in them and all laws of matter and spirit, Swami Rama said, "It is given to every one to interpret the Vedas, or for the matter of that any book, as he liked for his own purpose, to exalt his mind or to criticise it but no one has any right to obtrude his personal interpretation as true." Comparing Sayanacharya and Swami Dayanand he said that in the interpretation of the Vedas the latter was nowhere, that he brought out meanings, which were sometimes not at all there in the Mantras and at others looked very much stretched.

There is a good deal of text torturing now a days Sayanacharya's commentary is the only reliable guide for Vedic study. But if the Vedas have to live, they will require an up to date interpretation, just as the Bible has undergone various interpretations from age to age.

The Vedas contain the loftiest prayers and hymns in honour of the Divine Truth and as such are the treasure-houses for the spiritual minded, who will have to dig deep their own minds to come to the pristine innocence and glorious purity of the man when he first saw the phenomena of Nature. At places, the poetry of the Vedas shall always remain unsurpassable.

#### HIS END

One day while bathing in the *Billing Ganga* near Tehri Garhwal, Swami Rama was accidentally drowned in October 1906. The last thing that

he had written on the day of his death, only a few minutes previous to the sad occurrence was in his vernacular. Its substance in English is follows —

Oh death! Take away this body if you will I have many more bodies to live with I can afford to live happily wearing the silver threads of the moon and the golden rays of the sun I shall roam free singing in the guise of hilly brooks and streams I shall be dancing happily in the waves of the sea I am the graceful gait of the breeze and I am the wind inebriated These forms of mine are wandering forms of change I came down the tops, knocked at doors awakened the sleeping consoled one, wiped the tears of another, covered some cool off the veils of others, I touch this and I touch that I doff my hat and off I am I keep nothing with me Nobody can find me

Thus he clearly foreshadowed the end of which perhaps he was unconscious A great man was thus taken away by the Ganges and just when he was only thirty-three He intended to write a book on the "Beauties of Vedic Literature" and another one that he was contemplating all these years, viz., "The Dynamics of Mind," the books that now lie in his soul

#### HIS TEACHINGS

A reference has already been made to his complete works which when read together give an idea of his teachings The following extracts under different headings, however, may give a bird's eye view of his mind They are culled from his copious writings and are selected with a special view to elucidate his views on different subjects Some of these sayings are extracted from the publications of the Rama Tirtha Publication League

#### INDIA

The land of India is my own body The Comorin is my feet, the Himalayas my head From my hair flows the Ganges, from my head come the Brahmaputra and the Indus The Vindhya-chalas are girt round my loins The

Coromandel is my left and the Malabar my right leg I am the whole of India, and its east and west are my arms, and I spread them in a straight line to embrace humanity I am universal in my love Ah! such is the posture of my body It is standing and gazing at infinite space, but my inner spirit is the soul of all When I walk, I feel it is India walking When I speak, I feel it is India speaking When I breathe, I feel it is India breathing I am India, I am Shaka I am Shiva This is the highest realisation of patriotism, and this is Practical Vedanta

O setting Sun Thou art going to rise in India Wilt Thou please carry this message of Rama to that land of glory? May these tear drops of love be the morning dew in the fields of India' As a Shaiva worships Shiva, a Vaishnava Vishnu, a Christian Christ a Muhammadan Mahomed, with a heart turned into a "Burning Blush" I see and worship India in the form of a Shaiva Vaishnava, Christian Muhammadan, Parsi Sikh, Sanoyasi Pariah or any of Her children. I adore Thee in all Thy manifestations, Mother India, My Gaagaji, my Kali, my Ishth Deva, my Shalagram

Let every son of India stand for the service of the Whole, seeing that the whole of India is embodied in every son

Only personal and local Dharma must never be placed higher than the National Dharma The keeping of right proportions only secures felicity

Doing anything to promote the well-being of the Nation is serving cosmic powers, devas, or gods

To realize God have Sanayasa spirit i.e., entire renunciation of self-interest making the little self absolutely at one with the great self of Mother India

To realize the God of Bliss, have the Brahman spirit, dedicating your intellect to thoughts of the advancement of the Nation

To realize Bliss, you have to possess the Kshatriya spirit, readiness to lay down your life for the country at every second

To realize God you must have the true Vaishya Spirit, holding your property only in trust for the Nation

There are some for whom patriotism means constant brooding over the vanished glories of the past bankrupt bankers pouring over the long out dated and credit books now useless

Young would be Reformer' decry not the ancient customs and spirituality of India, by introducing a fresh element of discord, the Indian people cannot reach Unity

A country is strengthened not by great men with small views, but by small men with great views

#### RELIGION AND MORALS

Accept not a religion because it is the oldest, its being the oldest is no proof of its being the true one Sometimes the oldest houses ought to be pulled down and the oldest clothes must be changed The latest innovation if it can stand the test of Reason, is as the fresh rose bedecked with sparkling dew

Accept not a religion because it is the latest The latest things are not always the best, not having stood the test of time

Accept not a religion on the ground of its being believed in by a vast majority of mankind because the vast majority of mankind believe practically in the religion of Satan, in the religion of Ignorance There was a time when the vast majority of mankind believed in slavery, but that could be no proof of slavery being a proper Institution

Accept a thing and believe in a religion on its own merits Examine it yourself Sift it

Sell not your liberty to Buddha, Jesus, Mohamed, or Krishna

If three hundred and thirty three millions of Christ appear in the world, it will do no good unless you yourself undertake to remove the darkness within Depend not on others

All religion is simply an attempt to unveil ourselves, to explain our Self

True Religion means faith in Good rather than faith in God

Why should you consider yourself dependent on God, Christ, Mohamed, Buddha, Krishna, or any of the saints of this world? Free you are, each and all

\* /

Rama brings you a religion which is found in the streets, which is written upon the leaves, which is murmured by the brooks, which is whispered in the winds, which is throbbing in your own veins and arteries a religion which concerns your business and bosom, a religion which you have not to practise by going into a particular Church only, a religion which you have to practise and live in your every day life, about your hearth, in your dining room, everywhere you have to live that religion

#### PHILOSOPHY

The right spirit of Truth is to assert the supremacy of the individual against all the world all the Universe

\*

There is in reality only the one Self which we are, nothing besides it and since there is nothing besides the Self, you cannot consistently say that you are a part But it must follow that you are the Self entire There is no division in truth You are the Truth now

\*

Not for the sake of the child is the child dear, the child is dear for the sake of the self Not for the sake of the wife is wife dear, not for the sake of the husband is husband dear, the wife is dear for the sake of the self the husband is dear for the sake of the self Thus is the Truth

\*

Why should not people have any practical faith in death, although they have intellectual knowledge of it? Vedanta explains it this way "In man there is the real Self, which is immortal there is the real Self, which is everlasting unchanging, the same yesterday, to day and for ever in man there is something which knows no death, which knows no change"

\*

That which cannot be perceived by the mind, the eyes and other organs of senses, but make the mind, the eyes, etc, speed to their work, is Brahman

\*

Why fret and worry you restless infidel? None, none but your own sweet Self (Law Divine) has an exclusive rule over the universe

What are you ? Infinite and immaculate, immortal Self of all, is your Self

Have you a doubt as to your own Divine Self ? You had better a bullet in your heart than a doubt there God is the Reality, the world or phenomena is illusion

Live in your Godhead and you are free, your own master, Ruler of the Universe

The whole Universe serves one as his body, when he feels the Universal Soul as his very Self

Hunger and thirst are of the body and felt by the mind, but he himself, the true Self, is not pained or disturbed He (who realizes his own Divinity which is God, is not pained or disturbed by the fatigue, hunger or thirst of the body

Cultivate peace of mind, fill your mind with pure thoughts, and nobody can set himself against you That is the Law

#### RENUNCIATION

Renunciation alone leads to immortality

Vedantic renunciation, you have to keep yourself all the time upon the rock of renunciation and taking your stand firmly upon that vantage ground giving yourself up entirely to any work that presents itself, you will not be tired, you will be equal to any duty

Renunciation ought to begin with things nearest and dearest It is that false ego which I must give up, the idea that "I am doing this," "I am the agent" and "I am the enjoyer," the idea which engenders in me thus false personality

Retiring to the forests is simply a means to an end, it is like going to the University

Renunciation does not require you to go into the deepest forests of the Himalayas, renunciation does not demand of you to strip yourself of all clothing renunciation does not require you to walk barefoot and baredheaded

Renunciation should not be identified with passive helplessness and resigning weakness, nor should it be confounded with haughty asceticism It is no renunciation to let the temple of God, your body, be devoured up by cruel carnivorous wolves without resistance

\*

To keep thyself as something different and separate from Truth and then begin to renounce in the name of religion, implies appropriating what is not yours, it is embezzlement

\*

The civilised man without renunciation through love is only a more experienced and wiser savage

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There is no real enjoyment except in renunciation, there is no inspiration, there is no prayer except in renunciation

#### REALIZATION

Realize your divinity, your Godhead Look at any thing in the face, shrink not Look not at your self with the eyes of others but within your own self Your own self will always tell you that you are the greatest Self in all the world

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When you rise to that height of Divine love, when you rise to such a degree that in your father, in your mother, in everybody, you see not nothing but God, when you see, in the wife no wife, but the beloved one God, then, indeed you do become God, then, indeed are you in the presence of God

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Rise above the body, burn up this personality of yours, singe it, consume it, burn it up, then and then only will you see your desires fulfilled In other words, "Deny yourself"

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Realize your divinity and everything is done

Rama says, live on your own account, not for the opinions of others Be free Try to please the one Lord, the Self the one without a second, the real husband, master, your own inner God You will not in any case be able to satisfy the many, the public, the majority, and you are under no obligations to satisfy the hydra-headed mob

Set on fire the mūum and tuum east to the four  
winds all fear and hope eliminate differentiation let the  
head be not distinguished from the foot

Take to your work because work you have to do  
Work leads you to realization Do not take to work on  
any other ground

Rama says, "Be not afraid come out rally all your  
strength and energies and boldly take possession of your  
birth right, I am He" Be not afraid, tremble not

All desire is love, and love is God and that God you  
are Realize your oneness with that and you stand above  
everything

#### SWAMI RAMA AS A POET

Swami Rama was a real poet We cannot  
discuss here at length the merits of his poetry  
He wrote poetry in Hindi, Urdu, Persian and  
English One feature of his poetry was its  
awakening freshness He tried to free poetry of  
its limitations of metre like the great Walt  
Whitman and E Carpenter The following poem  
was set to music in America and sung in meetings  
held by Swami Rama

Within the temple of my heart  
The light of love its glory sheds,  
Despite the seeming briars & thorns  
The Flower of Love free fragrance spreads  
  
Perennial springs of bubbling joy  
With radiant sparkling splendour flow,  
Intoxicating melodies  
On wings of heavenly zephyrs blow,  
Yes! Peace and bliss and harmony—  
Bliss, Oh how divine!  
A flood of rolling symphony  
Supreme is mine  
  
Free birds of golden plumage sing  
Blithe songs of joy and praise  
Sweet children of the blushing spring  
Deep notes of welcome raise,

The roseate hues of nascent morn  
The meadows, lakes and hills adorn,  
The nimbus of perpetual grace  
Cool showers of nectar softly rains,  
  
The rainbow arch of charming colours  
With smiles the vast horizon paints  
The tiny pearls of dewdrops bright  
Lo ! in their hearts the sun contains